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ABSTRACT

Presented in this report are the results of a three-year case study designed (1) to document what happened in the classrooms of 10 teachers who were trained in a process approach to the teaching of writing, and (2) to provide those teachers with occasions to deepen their understanding of the process approach, by collaborating with them in the documentation of classroom practices and by assisting them in conducting small-scale basic research studies in their classrooms. The first part of the report describes the project as a whole, covering such topics as project objectives, the research site, the writing process orientation, the teachers, data collection methods, and research results. The second part contains supporting documents that include the following: 15 articles written by the teachers on classroom theory and practice, 3 of which are case studies; 5 articles written by the researchers for publication; 3 papers delivered at conferences; a list of conferences attended by study participants; and handouts from some of their presentations. (HOD)

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How Teachers Teach the Writing Process

Final Report
to
The National Institute of Education

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Researchers often talk of difficulty in gaining access to schools. Administrators, they say, can be hard to reach, school secretaries officious, teachers uncooperative, and students shy of strangers. For us, the opposite was true. From the day this project began, Shoreham-Wading River administrators, staff, teachers and students welcomed us into their schools and often into their homes.

When we first brought the idea of studying the teaching of writing to the Administrative Council, all of the district's principals, Dick Anderson, Cary Bell, Marty Brooks, Norman Bussiere and Shelley Levine, wrote letters of support; when we received funding, they fulfilled their promises. Norman Bussiere brought us articles and books on philosophy, literature and teaching, Marty Brooks took time to answer our questions, Cary Bell and his Assistant Principal, Bonne Sue Adams, found us a room of our own -- without windows but with empty file cabinets and desks -- in the newly-designed middle school offices.

This project would never have occurred if it weren't for the backing of two key administrators. Richard Doremus, the Superintendent of Schools, not only believed in our work and followed our progress as we came and went in the various schools but also was willing to make the district's resources available to us when it looked as if our own were running out. In particular, it was Dick who approved the district's support for our study group when our federal funds came to an end.

Mark Goldberg, high school Assistant Principal and the district's expert on writing, supported this project from an initial talk in a Syracuse restaurant through four years of hard work. He read our proposal, greeted us on the first day -- and many other days -- of school, walked us through the district, welcomed our consultants, visited our study group, came to us with questions and answered ours when he could, cheered and laughed and praised and encouraged.

Of course, no project in a school can function well without the help of secretaries. Based in the District Office, Helen Igoe tracked us down in each school whenever we had phone calls. Doris Olson offered assistance (on computers, with typing, fitting us into the Superintendent's busy schedule) whenever we asked. In the high school, Florence Giallorenzo let us stash our briefcases in her office and opened Mark's for us when he was away.

In Miller Avenue, Maria Gatz and Alice Teufel often typed for us while Marilyn Baran and Wilma Kehl gave us mailboxes and access to both their xerox and coffee machines.

The middle school secretaries came to know us best. Barbara Bajohr, Carla Schmidt and Pat Sturm smiled at three pm: when they were leaving for the day, we were frequently beginning the second part of ours, meeting and talking in our middle school office. To all of them, we offer our thanks, and especially to Jennie Klotz who wished us well every Thursday night as we left for the city and welcomed us back on Monday morning, and to Ginny Gannon who typed and typed and typed our early drafts.

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And finally, without ten teachers and their students, there would be no research, no report, no project at all. In fact, what follows here is as much a reflection of their thinking as it is of ours. To Audre Allison, Diane and Ross Burkhardt, Phyllis Glassman, Anita Graves, Reba Pekala, Len Schutzman, Jack Schwartz, Bill Silver, and Marcia Sitver, and to all the students whose lives we touched and who touched us, we say thank you.

Sondra Perl
Nancy Wilson

January 1985

How Teachers Teach the Writing Process

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How Teachers Teach the Writing Process

Part I: The Project as a Whole

> Teaching is an instinctual act, mindful of potential, craving of realizations, a pausing, seamless process, where one rehearses constantly while acting, sits as a spectator at a play one directs, engages every part in order to keep the choices open and the shape alive for the student, so that the student may enter in, and begin to do, what the teacher has done: make choices. [A. Bartlett Giamatti 1980. p.24]

Teaching and Writing

The way Giamatti describes teaching resembles the way an increasing number of scholars and researchers view writing. Writing, too, can be thought of as a seamless process. During this process, writers rehearse, sit at times as spectators, and engage themselves to keep the shape of what they are producing alive so others may enter in and see what the writers themselves have seen.

This view is offered to call attention to the similarity between two major areas of study -- teaching and writing -- both conceived as processes. The research described here is based on the assumption that an adequate understanding of teaching and writing must be based in part on observations of people as they engage in these processes. This study, then, is descriptive. The research team documented what happened in the classrooms of public school teachers who were and still are continuing to develop a process approach to the teaching of writing.

Basic Research on Writing

Taking a process approach to the teaching of writing is relatively new. Systematic investigation of the composing process only began within the last 15 years. Before that time, writing was generally taught, measured, and evaluated on the basis of a finished product. Such questions as what writers did during the composing process or how that process might be facilitated in the classroom were rarely given careful attention.

It was not until Janet Emig (1969) used a case-study approach to observe writers during the act of writing that empirical data concerning what writers do began to be collected. Since that time other researchers have followed Emig's lead and observed how writers of different ages and abilities compose. Some have used videotapes to examine the moment-by-moment interaction between writers and their emerging texts (Matsuhashi 1981). Others have sat beside students and watched them, recording their observations in fieldnotes (Calkins 1983; Graves 1982). Still others have used Emig's original technique of asking writers to compose aloud and devised methods for analyzing composing-aloud protocols (Flower & Hayes 1979; Perl 1979).

It is fitting that all of this work has been in the area of basic research. It would have been inconceivable for teachers to take a process approach to the teaching of writing without sufficient prior research into the nature of the composing process. Now the accumulated findings of basic research into the composing process are beginning to provide rich, new perspectives for the teaching and learning of writing. Very little is known, though, of what happens in classrooms when teachers' practices are informed by this research and theory.

While ethnographic studies that examine the process of schooling are increasing (see Ethnography in Education Research Forum 1980-1984), so far only a handful of ethnographers have chosen to examine the teaching and learning of writing (Clark & Florio, 1981; Clark, et. al. 1982; Nelson 1980; Woods-Elliott 1981).

This work is an important and impressive beginning. More needs to be done, as indicated by Donald Graves (1981, p.106), director of the Writing Process Laboratory at the University of New Hampshire and a major researcher on children's composing processes:

> The teaching of writing needs major focus for the 80's. But we can no longer afford the errors of the past when experimental designs were used to study specific teaching methodologies. Our preoccupations with the correct stimulus for writing, correcting and grading final products, or with exercises to increase sentence complexity need to be abandoned. So much more is now known about the nature of the process itself, children's development as writers, and the importance of the context of writing that a new focus is needed on the teacher. Even though much of our research has focused on teachers in the past, we have never actually studied the process of teaching writing. We have never studied even one teacher to know what ingredients are involved in teaching writing. Whereas the

> case study was the gateway to understanding the writing process and the ingredients involved in it, the same approach is now needed for the teaching process.

The Present Study

Objectives

The goal, then, of our research project was two-fold: (1) to document what happened in the classrooms of teachers who were trained in a process approach to the teaching of writing, and (2) to provide those teachers with occasions to deepen their understanding of the process approach by collaborating with them in the documentation of classroom practices and by assisting them in conducting small-scale basic research studies in their classrooms.

The Research Site

This study was collaborative, involving teachers, students, parents, and administrators in the Shoreham-Wading River School District on eastern Long Island, New York. Shoreham is a predominantly middle-class community with a total population of 8,300. Surrounded by Long Island's potato fields, it is more rural than suburban, yet it is close enough to New York City to retain more urban influence than the term "rural" commonly suggests. Since 1970, when LILCO began construction of the Shoreham Nuclear Power Plant, increased tax revenues have enabled the district to expand its school system and support innovative programs in its classrooms. There are now three elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school in the district, with a total student population of 2,200.

Shoreham, however, was not selected as a site for this research on the basis of its budget or its demographic profile. In fact, Shoreham became the obvious site for this research only after a number of events had taken place.

In the summers of 1979, 1980, and 1981, a total of 65 teachers and three administrators participated in 3-week writing workshops based on the Bay Area Writing Project model and led by Sondra Perl and Richard Sterling, the directors of the New York City Writing Project at Herbert H. Lehman College of the City University of New York.

The model, originally developed at the Bay Area site at the University of California at Berkeley, is now operating in more than 100 sites across the country. In Shoreham, it was tailored to meet the needs of teachers in the district and was influenced by the writing process research of Janet Emig, Donald Graves, and Sondra Perl. The writing process orientation is summarized below.

The Writing Process Orientation

The writing process orientation constitutes a complex shift in attitudes, behaviors, ideas, and approaches -- whose ramifications for the classroom have barely begun to be explored. What is known to date can be summarized as nine principles. Before we present them, though, it is important to note that we do not present any of these principles didactically at the beginning of a writing project. Rather, we allow for teachers to discover each principle by engaging in a number of activities. At the end of a summer project, teachers generally have sufficient experience as writers to see a new role for writing in their lives and to discover for themselves fresh approaches for presenting writing in their classrooms. Usually they arrive at decisions to initiate changes in their approaches to teaching that are consistent with some or all of the following principles.

Principle 1: Experience -- People learn to write by writing. If teachers are interested in teaching their students to write, they will provide opportunities for writing in their classrooms, and they will model the behaviors of writers by writing and sharing their writing with their students.

Principle 2: Invention -- The place to start is at the beginning. Choice of subject often determines the course of a writing experience. Teachers, using various invention strategies, can help their students find, either within themselves or in the world around them, topics worthy of their sustained attention.

Principle 3: Revision -- A first draft is only a beginning. Student writers, like professional writers, need time to revise their writing. Teachers who value the exploration of meaning and honing of craft that revision makes possible will encourage students to take their pieces through cycles of drafting and revision, and will make time for revision in their classrooms and homework assignments.

Principle 4: Range -- Writing includes experimenting with and mastering a number of different genres and forms of discourse. Exploring content through different points of view and different literary genres is one way of developing an understanding of form.

Principle 5: Collaboration -- teaching students how to read and respond to a piece of writing, particularly a piece of writing in progress, is one of the central tasks of a teacher in a writing class. Teachers show students how to respond by modeling a technique called "active listening." Students learn how to "say back" what they consider to be the gist of another student's piece of writing. This technique encourages writers to develop what they mean without teachers' and peers' judgements intervening prematurely. This technique becomes the basis for conferencing.

Principle 6: Audience -- Writers need real audiences for their writing. Having students in the class read their writing to one another in small groups or in pairs makes the concept of audience concrete. Students gain the experience of being readers and writers for each other and thus are better able to understand the relationships that develop among writers, readers, and texts.

Principle 7: Authorship -- The ultimate responsibility for writing lies with the author. Authors choose what to write, how to write it, and how much response they require. Learning how to accommodate to the demands of an audience is also the job of the writer with the support of the class and the teacher.

Principle 8: Connections -- As we become writers, so we become readers. Reading is an integral part of the writing process. Young children can learn to read through writing; older students who study their own writing and the writing of peers are learning skills that enrich their understanding of reading and literature as well as of writing itself.

Principle 9: Observation and Reflection -- All writers have composing processes. Understanding how the composing process works for individual writers is one of the goals of a writing class. Keeping notes in "process journals" is one way for teachers and students to record what happens when they write. Sharing these notes builds a body of knowledge about composing that is based on each person's experience and generally leads to discussion of such notions as recursiveness and discovery in writing.

Teachers

Prior to the summer workshops, none of the teachers in the district had received any substantial training in the teaching of writing. Few were aware of the research on the composing process, and even fewer had ever seriously thought of themselves as writers. Thus, before the project, these teachers were similar to many thousands of teachers across the country; they were talented, capable, and intelligent, but they had rarely given sustained attention to the theory and practice of teaching writing.

In the course of the summer workshops, however, they wrote, studied their own writing processes and those of other writers, and became familiar with current research on composing. And in the winters following the workshops, they began to report changes in what they were doing in their classrooms. Excited by these changes, by the innovative teaching we saw on our follow-up visits to the district, and by the teachers' own enthusiasm for what they were doing, we proposed to undertake an extended, collaborative study of the teaching of writing in Shoreham-Wading River.

All participants in the summer workshops were eligible to collaborate on the research project. Many were interested; in the end 10 volunteered to invite researchers into their classrooms to observe and study their teaching. Most of these teachers had taught for at least 10 years, several for close to 20. Three were former Peace Corps volunteers, all but two had children of their own. (Two became grandparents during the course of the study.) Four were men; six were women. All had had at least 1 year of writing project training before the study began, three had spent 2 years using writing project techniques in their classes, and one had been involved for 3 years prior to the start of the research project. They were distributed across grade levels as follows: one teacher each from Grades 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, and 12 and two teachers from Grade 8.

Data Collection

We used a case-study approach to examine the teaching and learning process. For the first year of the study, the three researchers spent each week a minimum of 3 days, and more often 4 days, in classes taking fieldnotes. Each researcher was responsible for a particular level: Carter, elementary; Perl, middle; and Wilson, high school. Each followed either three or four teachers for an entire school year. The breakdown is as follows:

Researcher	Teacher	Grade Level
Carter	Pekala, R.	1
	Schwartz, J.	2
	Graves, A.	4
	Silver, B.	4-5
Perl	Sitver, M.	6
	Burkhardt, D.	8
	Burkhardt, R.	8
Wilson	Glassman, P.	10
	Allison, A.	11
	Schutzman, L.	12

In addition, we each interviewed students, teachers, parents, and administrators; we attended school and community events; and we supervised the teachers' basic research on students' composing processes. Since the district was not within commuting distance of our homes, we lived in the homes of teachers. The fact that we were not returning to our homes each night gave us hours of after-school time to meet with teachers and to write, reflect, and talk with each other about the day's events. We read our fieldnotes to one another until late in the evening and kept a log of patterns and themes as they emerged.

As part of our collaborative work, we met with the 10 teachers in a 2-hour study group each week. During this time, we wrote, shared our perceptions of classroom events, studied current research, and strengthened our understanding of what it takes to develop a process approach in the classroom.

The teachers also kept teaching journals. In these we asked them to write about how and why they made choices and to articulate what guided their behavior in the classroom. In addition, we collected students' journals and written products for an entire school year.

During the second year of work, we spent the major portion of our time analyzing data and writing, returning to the district only for study group meetings and occasional classroom visits. Three teachers (Glassman, Schwartz, and Sitver) left the study group at the beginning of that year, one to take a sabbatical leave, the others to pursue other interests. At the end of the second year one of the researchers, Carter, left the study to return to his own teaching job. In the third year, then, a core group remained: seven teachers and two researchers, writing, thinking, meeting to discuss our perceptions of patterns and themes as they emerged from our observations, sharing our reflections, comparing notes on our findings, and together formulating new questions.

Summary of Results

Writing as a Social Act

Most striking to us whenever we entered any of these classrooms was the nature of the writing community. Whether we were in first grade or twelfth, fourth, eighth, or tenth, what we observed flew in the face of what observers normally expect to see in a traditional classroom: a teacher, up front, talking, explaining, assigning work; students, at their desks, listening, speaking only when called on, working quietly. Instead we found ourselves immersed in a community that often had a life of its own. To be sure, there were rules to guide behavior, but the rules, too, derived from the sense everyone had that making writing meaningful was the task at hand.

To make writing meaningful, students were encouraged, and expected, to learn from each other. Whereas in traditional classrooms, writing is often seen as a solitary endeavor, in these classrooms, it becomes the central concern of everyone. Students work together, help one another, form pairs, trios, small groups, alongside their teachers, with one aim: to produce writing they are proud of, that says something, that speaks to and further develops the community of writers there, in that room.

These are rooms in which collaboration -- and talk -- are central to the learning that occurs. For example, in the early grades, the act of writing is accompanied by and embedded within speech. First graders talk nonchalantly as they write, explaining their intentions, qualifying their ideas, borrowing phrases or topics from one another, frequently just thinking out loud. Fourth and fifth graders in the midst of writing frequently run around the room, buttonhole a friend, ask a question, and return to their texts. They pass notebooks back and forth, giggle, lean over their chairs and continue writing. Elementary teachers in these classrooms learn to listen selectively: it's not the noise level they pay attention to but the type of noise. A creative chatter, an identifiable busy hum is what they're listening for and what they encourage.

Middle school and high school students and their teachers enjoy the slightly quieter hum of a writing classroom where everyone is actively pursuing some private thought. As students become older, they seem to prefer to write in quiet places with few distractions. Yet while silence is important during drafting, collaboration becomes crucial afterwards. Replacing the spontaneous chatter of children is the reading of writing aloud and the writer's reliance on readers' reactions.

One fear voiced by critics of this collaborative approach is that students who rely so completely on their peers for feedback and response will become overly dependent on others. What happens, they ask, when no writing groups are available? Our research points to two answers. Students who work in groups frequently invent useful ways of reading and asking questions. These are not predetermined responses prepared for them by a teacher and handed out to them on a worksheet. They are the responses and questions that evolve quite naturally when one becomes a serious reader of another's text. Once students learn to approach texts usefully and creatively, -- they can do it anywhere -- even in response to their own writing. This serious prolonged group work benefits students and teaches them skills that paradoxically foster their own independence. As Matt, an eighth grader put it, "Last night at home, I didn't have a group, so I did what I thought was a writing group on my own."

Finally, writing as a social act is so firmly grounded in students experience, that they see no reason not to have the support of their peers. When Suzanne, a graduating high school senior, was asked how she'd survive in college without a writing group, she said, "If my friends at college don't know how to respond, I'll just teach them."

Teachers are Unique

If these classrooms all look so similar, aren't the teachers doing similar things? Aren't there shared patterns or themes that tie these teachers together? These are the kinds of questions readers often ask and researchers try to answer. For example, people often asked us, "After studying teachers for so long, what common traits have you discovered? Aren't there, after all, "types" of teachers who work best with this approach?" And, we answered, we have found similarities -- themes we call them -- but what interests us more are the variations. For, we discovered, no two teachers do any one thing alike. And the more we try to find generalities that tie these teachers together, the more trivial our findings become.

What emerges most clearly, in fact, after studying teachers and their teaching in depth is their uniqueness. We have come to believe that just as there is no one way to write so there is no one way to teach the writing process. Rather how teachers teach writing, or probably anything else for that matter, is a function of who they are, what matters to them, what they bring with them into the classroom and who they meet there. How they go about their work can be affected in certain important ways by conditions in the school, in the community, in the culture at large, but what affects teaching most deeply and dramatically are the themes, the interests and the deeply felt concerns that affect and give shape to teachers'lives.

Thus even the themes we identify as common, as influencing and shaping how teachers go about their work, are merely guideposts: beacons that shed light on different aspects of teachers at work.

Themes and Variations

Teachers as Writers

All of the teachers we studied find ways to teach writing through writing. All make it the central act in their classrooms; all know that engaging in it teaches in a way that talking about it doesn't. Yet, even making the act of writing central, by modeling, demonstrating, writing along with students, does not lead us to a set of presciptions. For what it means to be a writer with one's students is colored both by the role writing plays in teachers' lives and the goals they set for the learners in their classrooms.

Ross, for example, often reads or performs his writing in public. Performance, for him, is part of the process, a piece of writing not quite complete without it. Wanting for his students the same enjoyment he has, he sets up opportunities for them to perform as well, and in years when his teaching goes well, they do, in shows, skits, and plays.

For Audre, on the other hand, writing is primarily a private act, "what you do for yourself." Unlike Ross, she is nervous about reading in public, and shows it. But she goes on writing, in class and out, reporting her failures more often than her successes. Audre's students see in her someone who is not afraid to make mistakes and to flounder. They see as well someone who uses writing as a way to make discoveries about herself, the world she lives in, what she is thinking and feeling. Following her lead, they, too, begin to take risks in their writing, and some come to write, as she does, "for selfish reasons."

To Len, writing is a lens through which to view students' growth. A writer along with his students, he lets them in on his process, shares his struggles and his pride with them, as he expects them to do with him. Reba, too, looks at student writing and sees personal growth. Timid as a writer, she gives her students the confidence she wishes she had herself.

Bill approaches writing the way he approaches all subjects: as a tool for puzzling out the world. A problem-solver himself, he teaches writing as he teaches math, by studying the strategies students use to solve the problems it presents. A questioner himself, he want his students to learn how to ask questions. The heart of writing time, for him, is the individual conference, in which he talks seriously with his students about their writing and their writing processes.

By contrast, sharing time is often the focus of Anita's writing class. Anita, as a writer, often produces pieces that make people laugh. She reads deadpan, managing to look surprised each time the laughter explodes -- as if to say, "Who me? Did I say something funny?" Sharing time, for her, becomes a way of providing for her students an audience of persons who listen and, sometimes, laugh.

Diane uses writing as a way to know herself and to know others. In class, writing becomes a bridge, a way for her to develop and sustain the relationships that sustain her as a teacher. Students in her class see someone who values writing, who uses it daily to clarify her own thinking, and who uses it to reach out to them through notes, memos, and responses in journals. When her class is going well, talk of writing permeates the air and students come to use writing as she does: as a way to make meaning for themselves.

It struck us that teachers who write do so for very different reasons. Ross, Reba, Anita, and Bill write for -- and sometimes about -- their students; Audre and Lenny frequently write along with them; Diane more often than not writes to them. All of them write -- and yet for different purposes. And all of them find ways to make writing serve their own goals as teachers.

These distinctions, not obvious to us at first, made us question what else we had not seen. We challenged each other and the teachers in the study group to look closely and to examine just what the job of a writing teacher entails. What is it, we wondered, that writing teachers do when they teach writing? This questioning led us to see that we all agreed on one central notion: the job of teaching writing is not one of imposing a rigid set of rules that dictate the kinds of writers students will become but rather one of setting up the conditions that help students discover the kinds of writers they may be. We called such teaching the creation of "enabling circumstances."

Teachers as Enablers

The six teachers we studied all believe in letting learning happen, in setting up conditions that support students' growth as learners and respect their intentions as writers.

For all the teachers, being enablers means working from their students' strengths. In first grade, Reba marvels at a six year old's first story; in twelfth, Len beams at a 17-year-old's insight: both accepting wholeheartedly what their students produce, marvelling, listening, appreciating. Yet enabling students to grow, to write, can also mean "getting out of the way." And this notion, too, carries different meanings for different teachers.

Finding a balance between imposing and allowing, between controlling and letting go is often difficult. The teachers wrestle with it in their own ways, seeking to use their expertise in the service of their students' growth. Anita has learned "to have plans and backup plans but to be flexible enough to drop them all if a child finds an interesting bug climbing up the wall." Bill says, "It's not an either/or thing, like one minute you're standing in the road and the next either you're hit or you're not." In fact, Bill writes eloquently of the pain he often feels as an enabler:

> Can I convey the overwhelming difficulty of giving up control, of having patience, of "knowing" in my heart of hearts that probably the less I do, the more and better kids will write? Getting out of the way is a hard thing for an activist teacher. It's the feeling of not being needed or wanted. It's the pain of setting up a circumstance that makes me superfluous in so many ways.

Others, like Diane and Audre, want to amend and refine this notion, to make clear what they mean by enabling students to learn. Diane writes,

> I don't know about getting out of the way. Yes, get out of the way in terms of thwarting or limiting kids, don't be the reason they can't grow, but I don't want to be out of the way. I want to be with them on the way. I like the image of partnership better than the image of the teacher collecting dust in the corner while the students merrily do their thing.

And to Audre, setting up an environment for learning means having the students go on ahead of her and then, if they choose, to invite her to join them. She puts it this way: "You get the party together, then call me up." Each perspective has implications for teaching.

For Diane, "being with students on the way," means forming a bond with them in class. She watches them carefully, listens to what they have to say, shares her observations and questions with them, writes thoughtful responses in process journals and enters, as much as possible, into the students' ways of thinking in order to be able to help them take the next step.

Audre, wanting her students to "go on ahead," usually hears about what is happening in students' writing processes or in their writing groups when everyone else does: in whole-class meetings, when everyone comes together to report on what is going on. She and her students trade stories, tell each other news about writing -- writers together, talking shop.

Ross, a natural performer, probably wrestled the longest and hardest with this notion. The first year of the study was a difficult one for him. The give and take he was accustomed to with his students never materialized, and the failure of several important projects led him to reconsider whether or not he was, as he'd like to be, an enabler. He, and we with him, wondered whether his role as performer was too overpowering, too dominant. In taking center stage, was he, after all, leaving too little room for students to grow? Was he, in other words, too much in the way?

In 82-83, a year the study continued but not in his classroom, Ross experimented. He tried to "get out of the way." He deliberately read his work last -- or not at all. He visited other teachers' classrooms, notably Diane's, to see how they "did it." Yet, as the year went on and Ross talked about his teaching in our study group, we saw that not being a performer forced Ross to work against his own grain. Whatever benefit he had created for students, he seemed not to have created for himself, a strong enough role as classroom leader.

Ross' struggle brought several questions to light: Was performing at odds with enabling? Are "performers" too focused on themselves to be of help to students? Yet all the teachers in the group knew that they, too, at times, took center-stage; they too, performed and controlled students' attention and students' actions. Audre and Len, for example, are often the first in class to read their writing, especially when students seem hesitant or shy. Diane speaks of herself as a "benevolent dictator": controlling, orchestrating, in charge of what's going on even when it looks as though she's not. Bill, Reba, Anita -- all impose limits and set deadlines. Thus, Ross' dilemma shed new light on aspects of these teachers' behavior -- aspects not so readily visible before.

At the same time, Ross was discovering a new balance for himself. He discovered that enabling did not exclude performing, but that he could, at times, share the stage more readily with his students. One telling example became visible when we returned to his class for a brief visit during the second year of the study. We had all become accustomed to seeing Ross' many drafts of a piece displayed on a wall in his classroom, showing the changes and revisions he made as he moved from draft to draft. This day, as we entered his classroom, we saw displayed on the wall several drafts of a student's piece of writing. Above the display was the sign "Writer of the Week." Ross' reply, when we asked him about it, was "Oh, this is just a way I thought of to let kids see I'm not the only one who revises a poem 6 times. Isn't Andy's poem great?"

Ross taught us that it was not what a teacher does -- performing or something else -- but what a teacher communicates that has the greatest impact on students. In 1981-1982, when Ross' year turned sour and he lost touch with his students, he turned inward. His performances became fewer and those he did were self-involved, hollow. When, however, in subsequent years, his performing was once again imbued with the spirit of enabling -- when he used himself and his poems to reach out to kids -- his teaching was, once again, empowering.

Thus, we came to see that enabling students to learn, like so many other facets of the writing process approach, is not a matter of learning a simple set of procedures or techniques. It is a result of the way teachers think and believe and act and of the way they bring to bear the stamp of their own personalities on the classroom, the curriculum, and the students who learn with them.

Teachers as Learners

One reason these teachers are effective enablers is that they are not afraid to make mistakes. Their students see them learning, risking, trying new things, and as a result the students, too, are empowered to learn, to risk, to try new things.

For example, Audre often chooses for class study poems and stories she doesn't fully understand herself, so that she and her students can work their ways towards understanding together. Bill makes sure his students know that he himself doesn't always know how a given experiment will come out. Reba stamps her own work-in-progress with a rough draft stamp, letting her first graders know that she doesn't have to get her writing right the first time either.

Many of the teachers discuss their teaching with their students. They consult them about changes of direction, ask them to evaluate methods and materials, admit it when they think they have miscalculated. They go out of their way to show students how the mastery of craft, whether of writing or teaching, develops from reflection, practice, and constant questioning.

During the years of the research project, the teachers often talked about their research questions in class. Some shared the writing they were doing for the study group with their students. And of course we researchers, too, with our notebooks and pens and constant questions, provided evidence that the teachers were engaged in what a high school student referred to as "something important -- bigger than just school." Students could see that their teachers were learners, engaged in an ongoing process of experiment and change, of mastery and moving on -- learning that doesn't stop when the school day ends.

Committed Teaching

If teachers enable students to learn, what enables the teachers? What conditions help to make the teaching of writing, as we have described it here, possible? Our answers to these questions lead us in several other directions: to the type of reflection that occurs when teachers are committed to looking deeply at their own teaching; to the impact this reflection has when it is shared in the spirit of inquiry with others; and to the climate teachers find themselves in when they want to make changes in their teaching.

The Act of Reflection

Reflection is not usually an ongoing part of school life. Teachers are too busy; outside interests beckon. Yet when teachers take the time to pause and to examine what they are doing, they frequently feel rejuvenated, energized.

Often, although not always and not for all seven teachers, it was the teaching journal that occasioned the deepest reflection. Writing, at home, at night, or at school, early in the morning, or on trains, buses, or ferries, on school trips, or in hotel rooms at conferences, the teachers made plans, wrote notes to themselves, recorded their thoughts and feelings, reported on students and classroom events.

Although the teaching journal was originally a requirement for the study group, for most of the teachers it took on a life of its own. Diane wrote, "I want this journal to be for me -- I can't do it if it's just an assignment for a course." Diane was asking for something most of the teachers wanted: a way to have her writing about her teaching be meaningful for her. She was bringing to her journal a commitment beyond that required from a course. When she and the other teachers used their journals in ways that were meaningful for them, they frequently made discoveries. The journals became a way to stand back and examine teaching as it unfolded.

Sometimes the teachers saw. as if for the first time, the learning taking place right before their eyes. "Writing about my teaching has already changed me," wrote Audre, early in the first year of the study. "I'm listening harder, hearing more, and therefore finding delight more often and sometimes in the smallest comment which at another time would have gone unnoticed."

At other times the teachers focused on what wasn't working, at what discouraged or upset them, as in this excerpt from Bill's journal:

> The thing that I find most frustrating is the continual battle over having things completed. When half the class doesn't have drafts done, or never freewrites, or does a draft and then doesn't look at it for a week -- these make it hard to do anything with continuity. I feel like it all starts and stops, like a broken car. I can get some parts fixed, but then something else doesn't work, and there's just more aggravation.

Frequently they mused about particular kids and what was happening to them. Reba, for instance, wrote about Jeremy:

> Jeremy didn't share today. I'm really not sure how to light a fire under him. He does write when there is an assigned topic, but somehow it doesn't seem to be going anywhere.

When they wrote in these ways, and particularly when they raised doubts, and questioned themselves, wondered about kids or about what they themselves were doing in class, the teachers were engaging in an act of inquiry. They were saying, at least to themselves, that their teaching was open, subject to change and revision. Such thinking holds within it the key to further growth. Teaching evolves because, in the act of examining it, possibilities not visible before begin to emerge.

Collaboration: Reflection in Concert with Others

When the teachers brought their teaching journals to the study group and read from them to one another, the act of inquiry was shared. And as so often happens in groups, it sparked not one or two other inquiries, but dozens. Something Ross said or wrote made Bill reconsider what he was doing; Bill's comment affected how Anita or Audre saw something; what they said in response had an impact on the whole group. Week after week, for two years. Our original question, "How do teachers teach writing?" broke open, flew apart, fell in pieces around us. What does process mean? What is process anyway? How do we teach it? What does it mean when we say we want our kids to write? What is teaching anyway? Or writing for that matter?

Through writing and speaking about such questions, we entered into a dialogue, one that cut across traditional school boundaries. Elementary school teachers pursued questions with secondary school teachers; we, as university researchers, brought our questions to the schools. We lived there and chose to learn there. Together we formed a team, teachers and researchers writing and thinking together, trying to understand, to formulate knowledge, to shed light on the act of teaching.

What was renewing about this was the constant questioning and opportunity for dialogue. Tired after a day's work of teaching, or of taking fieldnotes, we all often left study group awake, excited. Those few hours together reminded us that our work extended beyond the doors of each classroom, that we were, each of us, members of a community of inquirers.

Collaborative inquiry of the sort we describe can occur, we imagine, in any school in which teachers and researchers agree to meet after hours and examine issues of concern to all. What made our work all the richer was that we, as researchers, were there the during school hours as well. Occasionally our study group discussions focused on the ways in which our presence affected classroom practice.

We were aware, of course, that we could never know whether each teacher's teaching would have been different had we not been there. We were there and our being there was part of the story. Accepting the notion that we can't separate the act of observing from the person who engages in it, we never tried to "fade into the woodwork." Rather, our approach was to take our own presence into account, to document how and in what ways we entered into classroom life. In fact, becoming part of the life of the classroom was an integral part of our research method. And what we learned about teachers, their teaching, their approaches and convictions came, we feel, primarily through immersing ourselves in the classrooms and coming to see them as the participants themselves did. Learning the classroom routines, participating in them, talking them over with the teachers enabled us to see teaching, to make it visible. Interestingly, our seeing offered the teachers a fresh vision as well.

Lenny put it this way:

> Having a researcher in my classroom inspired me to look deeply into my own teaching, to reflect upon it and really examine it in a way that I was unused to. I had taught on my feet a lot and always done a good job but the extra pair of eyes made me much more aware of what was happening.

Diane, too, felt that our eyes highlighted aspects of classroom life:

> Did you ever think that all your presence and Jamie's and Nancy's did in our classrooms was to magnify what goes on anyway? The presence of another pair of eyes and ears means that it seems bigger or more apparent that it would if there weren't an observer other than ourselves. By ourselves (alone) we can ignore what we see or close our eyes or look away to other things. With you here we are always in some ways seeing things through your eyes.

Ross saw our presence as "a truth squad," keeping him honest about his own perception of his teaching. Bill thought that it was our constant questioning that led him to view his teaching freshly.

All of the teachers agreed that opening the doors of their classrooms and inviting a researcher inside was risky. What made the risk worth taking was what they found on the other side: a colleague, someone who came to know the students as they did, who rejoiced in the students' growth, laughed at their jokes, smiled at their gropings, commiserated about their failures. In sharing the life of the class, the teachers shared their lives with us. And by working and learning along with them, we became not only their partners but also their friends.

The Climate for Innovation

It's not easy for teachers to make changes in their teaching. Trying something new or different, even if it's something we believe in, is risky. What enabled the teachers in Shoreham to initiate changes, to experiment, to talk openly with us and other teachers and administrators about both their successes and their failures, was a climate receptive to them and their growth.

In Shoreham, administrators view teachers as professionals, as the ones with the answers. And they view their own role as supporting this professional growth.

Teachers are not required to teach writing or anything else according to a prescribed curriculum. They are free to choose not only what they teach but how they teach it. For instance, no one was required to take the summer institute. Instead it was made available to any interested teacher. Those who took it and found value in it were encouraged to use as much or as little of it as they wanted. When the teachers said they wanted a second and then a third summer institute, administrators were not only pleased, some of them also signed up and wrote in it along with the teachers.

As the writing project gained momentum, parents became curious. What is this new approach, they wondered. How are my children being taught to write? With questions coming in all directions, administrators and teachers formed a committee. Together they designed evening workshops for parents. Led by Reba, Audre, Ross, Diane and several other teachers, parents were initiated into the writing process approach. In small groups, in each of the schools, they began writing, reading their writing aloud, learning writing the way their children were learning -- by writing.

Even beyond the writing project, teachers participate in making the decisions that affect them. In the early days of the district, teachers and administrators helped to design the environments they work in: the branching wings of the middle school and high school, the lofts and study corners and colorful carpeting of the elementary schools. Teachers and administrators worked together writing the "Statement of Philosophy" posted prominently in the middle school. Teachers serve on committees to design new courses and revise old ones; they meet regularly with administrators to decide what courses will be taught and who will teach them, and to discuss the philosophy, pedagogy and practical day to day running of their schools.

Of course, support in terms of budgetary items is easy to come by when a district has the generous backing the LILCO power plant makes possible. But our point here is different. Many school districts in the country have budgets based on substantial tax revenues, yet the school boards who control them all too often choose not to put their resources so directly in the hands of teachers. But, even more important, what we find as the crucial ingredient in Shoreham has little to do with money. Even schools with depleted budgets can enable their teachers to grow, to risk, to change. The writing project is merely a case in point, but obviously the one we know best. And in this instance, rather than control the direction the writing project was taking, administrators allowed the teachers to control it, to shape it, making it a project the teachers felt was truly theirs. What these administrators did, in essence, was demonstrate the kind of faith in teachers that empowers them to do their best teaching.

Part II: Supporting Documents

Introduction

Writing has been part of every stage of this project. The seven teachers and three researchers involved in it since its beginning have written constantly, from the first day we began work in Shoreham-Wading River until the day, two and a half years later, our study group disbanded. Many of us are writing still.

We wrote, at the beginning, to formulate questions, to set goals, to discover and articulate our dreams and hopes for the study. As time went on, we wrote to record our observations, to capture our reactions to them, to try to understand them. We wrote to share our thoughts, back and forth to one another in the pages of the teachers' journals. We wrote together, in study group, to explore issues that concerned us all. The teachers kept teaching journals, and wrote articles on teaching and case studies of individual students; we researchers wrote memos we discussed with the teachers, later chronological narrative accounts of classroom events, later still "portraits" of teachers organized around themes rather than chronology. And the teachers commented, in writing, on what we wrote about them.

Since writing has been woven so tightly into the fabric of this study, we have chosen to present, as part of our final report, not only a set of "findings" -- extracted from the materials, smoothed and shaped to a pattern -- but also the fabric itself: a rough tapestry, with the texture of its weave showing, and its edges still untrimmed. We have chosen, from all the writing generated by seven teachers and three researchers over a period of three years, representative samples of the kinds of writing produced at each stage of the project. Some of the pieces we include have been revised and edited for publication; others, especially those we wrote as "in house" pieces, appear in working drafts.

We have organized these materials chronologically, "raw" data first, followed by pieces in which teachers and researchers stand back from the data, organize it in different ways, look at it from different perspectives.

The first section, Ethnographic Inquiry in Progress, contains samples of handwritten fieldnotes (from the researchers) and journal entries (from the teachers), most of these from the first year of the study. Notes and journal entries are followed by what we called "calendars" -- sheets on which we summarized main events in classrooms, in order to give ourselves an overview of life in Shoreham-Wading River writing classes. Roughly contemporary with these are what we came to call "Thinking Aloud Memos": summaries of major themes in the world of each classroom, reflections on particular issues or events we thought might turn out to be significant, and further questions generated by these reflections. These memos served as the basis for our dialogues with teachers: first attempts to analyze what we were seeing and to make our analyses available to the teachers about whom we were writing.

While we wrote our first memos, we asked the teachers to join us in our inquiry and to write about their own views of teaching before they saw ours. We asked them to reflect on their teaching and to write about it in what we came to call their "Implicit Classroom" statements. These, too, are included in this section on early data generated during the study.

By our second year, we were spending less time in classrooms and more in our office, sifting through the data we had collected, and thinking, talking and writing about it from different perspectives. During this second year we composed, from fieldnotes, teachers' journals, tape recordings of students' writing groups, teachers' assignment sheets and handouts, and students' writing (including drafts, finished pieces, process journals, reading logs, etc.,) narrative accounts, each 500 to 800 pages long, of the main events in the three classrooms we observed most regularly. From the bulky notebooks containing these accounts, we have included representative or significant sections to illustrate how we went about this second level of analysis. Here, too, we have included seven short, impressionistic studies of teachers -- "instant portraits," we called them -- emphasizing themes that emerged most strongly from the teachers' journals as we read and reread them at various stages of the project.

While we were writing our narratives and portraits, the teachers were writing about their forays into the world of classroom research. Included in the second section, Products, are fifteen articles written by the teachers on classroom theory and practice, three of which are case studies.

Although we spent much of our time as researchers writing to discover what we knew, at other times we wrote to share what we were learning with a wider audience. In section three, Products, we present five articles we wrote for publication and three papers we delivered at conferences. Included here, too, is a list of the work that has grown out of this study.

And, finally, while all this writing was going on, groups of teachers, researchers and students were meeting together, writing and traveling to conferences to present, to audiences of other teachers and researchers, samples of the fruits of our research. The fourth section of this report, Dissemination, contains a list of conferences attended by participants in the study and handouts from some of our presentations.

The last section contains a bibliography of the works of writers, teachers, researchers, ethnographers and philosophers who continue to influence us as we continue to study the lives of teachers.

Section 1

Ethnographic Inquiry in Progress

Sample Fieldnotes

DAY 7, Thurs. Sept. 17 - Eng. A. [illegible]

Fieldnotes from Diane Burkhardt's
8th Grade Class

- joke that D knows her schedule better than she does.

D's up front - Jane in. She says, it's 8:42. D mention congestion in hall as result of new walls. She says she never goes out there. D take seat near wall opp. windows.

D- You should have all your n.b's - pj., idea log. Kids get settled.

D- This is Thurs. D-Day, Sept. [illegible], 17th

D-repeats announcement abt. nb's - who's sitting there? (chair next to me is vacant but has books on it) - nobody here. Who is she? - Chris comes in.

D delivers a letter to grl. (response to their letters to her)

Ok - Let's consider letters to Dr. B - Do you consider them st. you can send to him? comments: yes, no, sloppy, almost -

D- why don't you read again to partner. See if you agree if it's ready. -

grl: Say back?

D- well, be more informal abt. it. Let's all stay here & spread out. Why - that's what I want to do.

Kathy - Let's do it. -

abt. 10 min. later - I work w. Chris & ___. They read to each other & mostly criticize: "I think you should do or change X." I mediate a little abt. tone. Is it ok. for Dr. B. to hear diff. tones - one reasonable, other, angry.

I think a lot of people are done.

Now, how handle this. Should get to Dr. B. in next few days.

They vote on 2 ideas - hand letters in to D. for editing or to partners. (Seth's idea)
they second motion to " " " " " " ". Sl: Discussion; Brian: no. D-yes - I won't do it. Why should I edit your work? I won't all year?

D-Let Dr. B. know that these are unedited letters.

-grl: can't send letter like that - tacky to send letter to principal that aren't right.

D- Don't you get letters - S orry / S loppy } on board -

Dr. B. is educator - he has to und. proc. we go thru - I'm not worried abt. sending him unedited stuff - not for pub. - I'm comfortable, unless you're not.

D's on this - kids decide to ~~not~~ write them as best they can, D will tell him they are unedited anyway. They vote. Ay, Nay -

Your next Eng. class is Tues. - talk abt. handing in letter - D Dilleney is prob. freaking out. - noise carries.
Wed., Fri. in S.S., Mon. in S.S., Tues. in class -
Pen or pencil?

D- My personal opinion? pen.

- Put letter away: Open p.j. to next available page. write date, put pencils down. We've talked before abt. publishing - I have goal pub. before Nov. 19. Think abt. what to write. If we write several first drafts - one w. grp. - then choice - here's one like best - revise to final form that worked last yr. Always option do st. diff. - Since w

begin piece of writing for 90

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Can you never not think?
Rd. Don Murray excerpt -
Survey on literacy - uses of w. - in their lives.

} D. has asked me to think of ways to broaden their und. of process. These are notes I made. - Also, having them observe 1st & 2nd graders cp.

28

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class til Tues. - I want you to bring to class a piece of w. - poem, play, dialogue, whatever. Whether you know it or not, you started thinking abt. what you will write. Want you to write right now what you are thinking in p.j.

Margaret: I'm thinking nothing.

D - why don't you ~~write~~ state that?

Everyone is now writing. Girls on one half of room, boys on other -

D ok. abt. 1 more minute. Some talk.

I think everyone's done.

well }

Scott: Seems like more idea log than process.

Mary: first step in process to your idea - seems like process.

Kathy. I thought it was both - write in p.j. then I put it in idea log.

D: like us to share now what we wrote -

Brian - oh - like 2 diff. parts - "how many diff. ways you can commit suicide in school"

Seth: "How does she know what's in my head? I'm thinking nothing (?)"

Matt: song going thru head - it's gone - it's back -

D responding to Bill(?). You think you need to have idea. Ok. to write your thoughts

Scott: I can write process for an idea - journal can write an idea for process.

Kristen. process was after - Mr. C. gave us idea - what stages you went thru

D - I think need to help you broaden

Are you a writer? - Some yes, no, not prof.

I think of you - granted not well yet - I think of you as writers. All of us are writers. Think of all times you write. - notes, letters, assignments, There is thinking proc. going on all time that is that writer part of us. In Eng class - I know what happens to me when I say have to write for Tues. Reads fr. her journal - "no idea - I envy people who know immed. -"

*

goes back to group.

Gregg: doesn't want to read - summarizes - how long - 5 days away -

Kristen: maybe haiku - how many -

brown hair, small blonde, heavy

Krissy: good int. monologue - "why do they do this to us? So much h.w. - - -

Nancy

Assignment: minimum - write where idea came from -

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F[illegible] [illegible]
Rm. Day 14;
T+W. - Holiday

Thursday, Oct. 1 Day 15 Eng A

Kids getting settled; D passing out some folders. Sees me in chair - Says, I didn't see you. G.M. S: G.M. - D. starts class, ok - I'm
I'm freezing to death. Literally.
Things to distribute. I don't know why I'm handing this out. Well, yes I do. My husband rushed in here this am + said hand this out.
They discuss Friendship Day at Library + Rose' slide presentation - to take place Sat.
D- Announces Parents W. Workshops for next week + week later. Rem I was telling you abt. Open House - parents; you sometimes wish parents und. abt first drafts, why do I feel no one is paying slightest bit of att? - looks around - orig. idea - you write letter - but
Explains - due to time considerations I wrote letter - you address envelope - some disappointment. Kids: joking, to Mom -
girl: asks abt. why women take men's name.
D- Woman gives up her identity when she marries.
Kirsten: I'm going to put her maiden name - then she'll throw it out - Junk mail.
D - Kirsten, you know I was kidding. Looks at me. not really.
Seth: shut it?
Some talk abt. who won a social studies contest.
D collects letters. Kirsten says she doesn't want her mother to know ~~as~~ enough to talk abt. writing w. her.
D - OK. D.J.'s - long awaited. She hands back journals fr. inside of circle.
Now what is all this nonsense I've heard - you can't w. process, you dont und it.
Brian: I hate it.
D - That's different. You can hate it but ~~can't~~ what abt. idea that can't w. it.
D - I found int. things. - Think of it as research. That's what we are doing. (To me.) ~~write~~ right? To class - even if S. weren't here. It's exploratory. I got feeling you think all process entries are the same. We are each diff. people. Nancy + [illegible] I write same way? Sometimes?
N. mumbles response. In D.J. you write abt. your ow

* pay att. to what happens. Crawl outside body, sit on shoulder + look at what is going on in your brain.
Kirsten: means - think of a thing at same time - how you write + how to make w. good.
D - Set a time next time - then stop + ask, what else am I thinking about? Sometimes not aware of other things.

lets make eye contact here. yeah. It's impt to me that you und. what you are doing when you explore -
Diff. ways to use it - Each wrote piece - take p.j. - just what whatever comes to your mind abt. w. that piece -
K: shouldn't it be idea log?
D explains again. You wrote ~~st~~ piece - a few min. ago or as long ago as Friday. Just keep w. till I say times up.
abt. 5 min. Everyone is now writing, including D. I review my notes.
- ok. Seth + Matt fooling around w. pens - Some still w.
D. Who learned st. you didn't know before?
volunteer Marge: should I read this? Reads f. j. - explains she went back + added details - D. listens -
Brian: "excited abt. tennis.. wanted to w. s.t. diff - sports? - w. abt. tennis - took my feelings out on tennis.
D calls on Kirsten: "humble-jumble on paper - crumpled up - explains it was bad - thinking abt. weekend - ideas -
D you threw it out? Know where you could write it? p.j. -
I don't put value j. on my p.j. - this just is - baby - this just is -
- Reads fr process-journal of summer - lists of words, on her pen, hope R. won't get up so she can w. alone, reads abt. her idea for new piece - t. in car, cig. falls on lap, explains how she uses journal - this new piece - interior monologue - write straight thru -
Q. on ending, humor -
Nancy - reads - abt. w. haiku - disc. on syllables necessary.
D - asks if they've all written haiku - hands up - + if it's harder to do haiku.
Some discussion on boundaries - Seth: easier for story -
D - who would like to share piece for today? Tom. w - grps.

Anyone want to share piece? no response. D. How come?
Brian: it's stupid. D - how many feel like Brian - it's stupid?
3 boys raise hands.
Are you accustomed to having people tell you your w. is stupid?
Some yes, some no.
Brian: they beat around bush. Say maybe you should change this.

on w. grps

Gregg: they say maybe you sh. rew. so it's good
D - what other exp. w. p. judging.
Tara - they say why dont w. abt. s.t. else? why this?
D - that's it. Why do you w. what you w.?
Brian: it just came to me.
D - y.k, when people say - this is stupid - etc - how tell diff. they mean it or they are afraid - apologizing in advance.
Kristen: Brian prob. doesn't want to read in front of whole group.

D - your voice is dropping off (to Brian) there is a quietness disease in this class.
D - yk, I can barely stand this anymore. We're going to stand... She demonstrates.
Has kids stand up + scream.
What is it? kids: weather;
D - Bull. You make your own weather. -
Drawn f. other grp - why scream?
Kathy: she said she couldn't stand it anymore.
Class ends.

Kids in Dennis' class scream back.
- funny
D - own notes.

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P.M. - not here Day 78 - car broke down.

Tues. Jan. 19 Eng. A. Day 79

D move out of circle - prep to do automatic writing. not natural to write in a circle - Whit. - Leslie - Made f. 6th grade notebook - "Thank you letter to diff. parts of your body". In adv. we said this wasn't approp. for 8th grade - Kathy: we have dirty minds.

Diane: Yest. we did autom. w; some people call it blabbering, some call it free w; some call it...

✓ Brian: stupid.

No one I've rd. says it's stupid. B: wait til you read mine. Didn't und. why we are doing this.

✓ D. Peter Elbow uses this as a way to free yourself to pay att. to what's on your mind. Hook up arm to brain + let go - automatically - if you don't control it, you can find out what's in your mind. Another thing - way to clear junk out of your mind. Way he uses it - do that first - then go on to work on other w. Review 2 rules

✓ Scott: don't stop w.

D. If can't think of s.t., write last wd. over again - usually will go on - ✓ Pt. is don't break connection - If you lift the pen - you break connection. Who has a watch?

O.K. Get connection made. Start energy flow going. Go.

(5 min.?) D. Time's up.

Scott: seemed longer. - Scott: 5 min. D. I wanted to do 4.

D - are they similar? - cf. to yesterday. Brian: not mine. First one jumped around -

Kathy - yesterday - w abt w; today - more personal. D: me too. One thing I came to - I haven't thought at all abt. what I'm thinking abt. Anyone else?

Mary: yest. abt. other people - today more on me.

D - were you conscious of Allendorf; t. abt. models. - He's t. abt. ships - I thought of fashion models - then that made me think of Laura on GH. - I like seeing where my mind goes.

• Come back to circle. Take out h.w. Brian asks me what he said on Sept. 1. S: no school. I don't know what you said. B: what abt Sept. 8? S: in my other book. I show him Dec. 18 -

B - there I am -

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B: Are we going to read? D. Yes. B. Can I go first? D - we'll go around.
Chris T: int. monologue abt diving into pool.
Leslie - abt. picking up telephone.
Tara: abt. inviting people to a party.
Bill P: It's stupid. D: You're calling a first draft ~~that~~ abt. st you've never done before stupid? Bill: yes. D: I'm in a quandary. If I say you don't need to rd, know how many people won't want to rd." D: What's it on? Bill: That's what's stupid
✓ Seth: no one will shoot you down.
Brian: no one's going to laugh at you, laugh w you.
D: ok. don't rd. maybe later
Gregg: homework.
Scott: Oh god, he'll kill me - I'll never win racquet ball tournament.
Meg: abt. being asked to the prom by fat boy. (not really an int. monologue)
Christian: (not an int. monologue - telling what happened).
D - how could you turn that more into int. mono.
Brian: Oh my god, she might hit me. D: You could see clock, say "oh no".
Brian: "First." abt. skiing. "Please god, don't let me die."
Mike: on parachuting. "Oh, my stomach"
Matt S: "She's going to blame it on me..."
Coleen: on being drunk
Pam: on being picked in gym class to do demonstration of relay race.
Nancy: on being at the doctor. - after rdg, I wasn't in mood to write - I got idea of taking the cat to the vet.
D - I tried to picture myself in a part. setting. Did you try to picture yourself there? Brian, did you ever ski + think that?
B: sort of, this is like memory. D - You never parachuted, Mike. Did you picture it in your mind? Mike: I guess. D - Then I'd say you didn't. How did you do it? Mike: I don't know.
Kristen: on looking at boy or being looked at (?)
Dawn: on coming in late to class.
D. rds. abt girl wanting to talk to boy - clothing; how fit w. int. monologue?
✓ Brian: easy. D: Any comments? Brian: I liked Nancy's. M: real
B: sounds like you're right there - I hate to get shots - spring - allergy

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✓ D: mine is real. I pictured a part. moment – in 9th grade – Stan Medbury · good basketball player. I thought I couldn't talk to him.

D: what if w. another int. monol. for tomorrow? What if try to be someone not you? try doing inner thoughts of say, adult,

Seth: or opposite sex? – D: good. What if I were to do int. monol. on guy, like diff p.o.v.? Seth: I know just what he wd. say – "why is it she coming over?" D – That's what I was going to say – good.

Wed. Jan. 20 – Eng. A.

We are beg. like this am on automatic – plug yourself in. Anyone have an alarm watch on? No? So I'll watch the time. What a drag.

Brian: Just wait til I get some thoughts.

9:36 D: The thoughts are there Brian, just put your pen down. Go.

9:41 D. Stop. kids keep w. Stop.

✓ Do you notice any diff. today? How many one one track? Jumped around How many jumping minds? How many one tracked minds?
I've never had my mind stay in 1 track.

block out noises –

Be

S: Do you w. in sentences? Most kids yes.
This a diff. technique. In order for it to be of use, you've got to allow flow –
opposite – you don't

Karsten: This is your way of w. on us. You're pushing it on us. Like my father – If he's into it, we have to do it. This is my idea log, I don't want to w. like that.

D –

M – I've only written once in just words – I cld. write in sentences –
✓ I don't think you are controlling yourself if you w. ~~at~~ in sentences.

Brian: You showed us wrong. You wrote in sentences.

D – On Monday – I did what was on my mind.

Chrissy: I think in sentences – when I look outside, I don't say snow.

Seth: Do what's comfortable.

Nancy: I talk to myself - I don't think in words.

Leslie: I only pay att. to what I'm w. -

D. rds. her free w - "panache"

Seth: You say clear your head - look up - get more - never clear your head -

S: Right,

D - Trying to help you acquire tools for w. - Thinking abt. c.p. - proc.j.. You didn't see value in it - controversy. S.t. I wrote, let you see where my head is at? - I'm wond. Do you see any more value in p.j.'s than you did before?
Scary? "Yes"

Good time for you to do res. on yourself as a writer. Material you use is your p.j. Go back & reread your p.j. - look thru it & try to learn fr. it - what you have written & how. How do you write?

You are writers. How do you do it?

- D. rds. a few excerpts fr. Elaine's students' colleagues on w. proc.
- Then hand-out on assignment - whole general description of how you write.

What Kristen said - impt. If you're not honest, trying to please, it's b.s. Bull shit. Doesn't mean anything. What do you know abt. yourselves as writers?

9th per. Exp B Wed.

I rush in from Miller Ave. School -

sentences broke. Mike A: I forced myself to finish.

Tom: I didn't lose any thoughts. One almost slipped away but it didn't.

Patty - heard Allendorf - poster -

Chrissy - heard S. come in - mind going faster than I could write -

Mike S. - I - A. say "charades". I had nothing to write - heard silence in here -

April - asking Brian a Q.

Drs. abt. sentences. Jeff: "If you really pay attn you don't think in sentences"

J. how do you know?

J: my own exp. When I used to do this - joke - when I was a kid - try to follow my mind -

Diane Del: leave out little words - just keep going -

Mike: I limit myself to what I write on paper. What if someone sees it.

J: privacy issue. S: you censor your thoughts.

D - I've noticed - people look over at other's n.b.'s - demonstrates w. Jim. I wish you'd respect each other's privacy. I think everyone needs privacy - you need time alone - w. this, need private place to w..

D - I will invite you to talk to other class - "we don't think in sentences."

- Can we put int. monol. on hold? St. else I'd like us to do.

Recall p.j. dis - you don't like it - hate it - That's still on my mind - have conversations w. people - some, now I und.; others, still don't know. Now time for us to take another look at p.j.'s - I wrote abt. this in my journal over weekend. share w. you.

[What are kids thinking when D. reads aloud f. journal?]

Let's do some res. to find out how useful p.j. is -

If you went back + reread, what might you find out abt. how you write?

Diane: in a pattern. D.

D: explains Elaine's assignment - We read three p.j. entries of Gillian.

April: personal w. - some I can't share w. people.

Regina: She seemed more conf. in end.

D. she's realized some things - nature of topic.

- If you took p.j., what wld. you learn abt. yourself as a writer?

D. hands out instruction sheet.

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Wed. Feb. 24 Day 100

R: 1 person missing - kids: grey?

How many of you read Shoe? (Comic strip). R. not my favorite - Doonesbury, Peanuts, Apt. 3G - kids - no -

rds. comic strip - W. is easy .... Beads of blood appear on your forehead"

W. is difficult - can be tiring.

I've been doing a lot of w. lately. - 16 letters last pd. - comments in your journals - my journal. Haven't done any creative w. lately. Yesterday I wrote a poem. Sitting where Lee was sitting - our wtg. gp. 'I haven't penned a poem in weeks' The truth - I've liked that line - I'm feeling pressure abt. the show - you kids should know that - did first draft in S's class yesterday - then 2nd draft - typed it at home - this a.m. 4th draft - R. reads poem - kids quiet.

R - wrote 2 letters to 2 people - I sent them this a.m - feel real good abt. that - People in Wash. thing - met at 11:15 today.

I also have typed copies of people's writing for the show - need to rd. thru them + make decisions - on tape, done aloud, etc. I haven't typed up every single piece. When you are done, pass to your left.

Cary, B. J., + Tina work~~ing~~ on Individual - (they don't get much done - the task seems too large, no one takes charge - they don't make any decisions or have any serious discussions.)

Thurs, Feb 25 Day 101

R: who's not here. Becky? Kristy? only 15 or so kids here.

What I want to do is check off your letters (15 min.).

sits on stool - des. abt. 2 yrs. ago - rooms - Mr. Kaplan - had La Valle's room - I had K's room - kids: who was here? R: Dorsky -

Cray: Mr B, you did all this to your room in 3 years? R: in one day - take it all down at end of year - strike the set, so to speak

Mr. K. + I did a number of things together - I wrote the following letter - R rds. letter to Bob -

R: he said, Thanks, - already some t's telling me they got letters fr. kids -

how was it to w. this piece - what kind of exp. was it?

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R: Nicole, how was it? N: I don't know. R: mind set the same?
N: different, w. abt. what happened.
R: Steve? S: a letter. R: Kevin? K: abt. the same.
R: Everyone have this response? I thought it wld. be diff. B: no.
Barb: better than other pieces - never thanked people, this was
appret - could just w. feelings out on paper.
R: Was this more impt than other w.?
B. yeah. this was good - I don't know - not like facts to Dr. B.
Kristy: it was easier.
Diane: - got to pick who you wanted. With
person in mind, knew what you want to write.
Kristy: w. piece of w. it's due: this is an excuse
Tina: not as boring as w. another piece - this is s.t. you
want to do.
R: on bd: Investment: Kerri, what abt. you?
K: good - it helps you to feel good - told someone you are grateful.
R: what abt. task of w. letter? put more into it? K: yeah.
R: wait til I finish -
K: not like a story where you have to think abt. it.
R: didn't you have to choose your wds. w. care?
K: yeah,
Chris: took me a while to do it
R: didn't do this before? C: yeah. R: harder? C: yeah.
R: Mike? M: I don't know. R: If you don't, who does?
R: was it diff? M: yeah,
Sh: (vol) - it was like letter to self - s.t. already happened -
R: what I had asked - was to avoid - (on bd.) perfunctory
w. - where you have to do s.t. to hand it in. I really
feel that w. is an imp't means of commun - I wanted
you - pleased to see it did w. some - get away fr. perf -
do st. that matters - Rem. poem - yest - for me, real
investment in that - I was feeling bad - had to deal w.
that - capture that. When w, how bring that investment
to writing? What does it take? Anyone know? (few
seconds of silence) -

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R: Rob? R: like a diary entry. Ross: did you do it w. investment. R: NO.
Kristy - when read to whole class - just do it - when to one person, more of yourself
R: on bd. "You hide yourself." R. sits in gp. for a moment.
Frank: people might laugh.
R: What F. is saying,
Tina: you don't know how they'll react.
R: people agree w. Frank?
R: is your w. dishonest? Kids: NO - R: Then what is it?
not what you feel; to one person, it's more honest.
Idie letter to self is more honest.
Diane: not dishonest. Have to mean it to give it to someone - in spare time, won't write a piece.
Kerri: letters are personal. Don't want to w. personally - don't want others to know.
B: more emot. involved w. letter than in piece abt. pollution.
Kristy: piece of w. is surface - letter is deeper - you're not trying to make it meaningful.
S: could you make w. more " ? Yes, no. Jan: s.t. don't want to share.
L: people we haven't heard from
Gina: people don't want to share w. whole class.
R: Jan said, people could, but won't.
Mike: I write abt. trip I took - no investment. R: why do it?
kids: have to. - get D's -
R: just raising D's - not critical - you all know me by now - Do you think I'll give you D's?
Talk abt. grades.
R: other question is - Tina: are you saying we don't have to w. pieces?
R: what I wd. like is for you to do w. impt. to you.
Kristy: I won't spill my guts to whole class.
R: is my w. honest?
K: you don't write abt. stuff you don't want anyone to know. Not dishonest if not personal.
Darlene: you want to read.
Jamie: no one will make fun of you in hallway.

1-15

Rd

25

9/16 Pd. 1 Day 6 Listening - 2nd day

AA "Today what we're going to do is correct the test." I'll give you answer sheets & you correct.

For lit. section of notebk. "Now that you are beginning to read" ~~keep~~ write down reactions, q.s "Just ask yourself a lot of qs.: Why did the author say this? ... This is boring etc. ... Question yourself abt. the tone of the author." This is your "literary journal."

AA "One more thing abt. writing..." gets distracted by st. qs. ... "Yeah, we're going to do some writing today — Don't worry ... Hi, how are you Nan?" (goes on) ... (to class) Those of you who haven't finished it, just move to one of those tables. Try to finish it yourself & you check the answers."

At my table: John: I got 6 wrong out of 10. Similar convs., counting, heard f. other tables. Kurt: "Last time I took one of these tests... Got every one of them wrong." Anthony "This is a record — 3 in a row" (right, I think; maybe wrong).

~~Kurt~~ Sts. enter scores on 'Assessment' sheet (see folder).

John enters 4 right out of poss 10, 7 of 20, 8 of 10 (~~also~~ "not bad," he says), 10 of 20, 4 of 5, 4 of 30. (John, Kurt & Anthony all score low on listening (qs. abt. tone & inference). Anthony: "I almost got half of them wrong"

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20

AA moves around, checking & encouraging. To John (cheerfully) "Well – not bad for the beginning of 11th grade... you'll have lots of practice wrtg. & listening; by the end of the year you'll be a superb listener."

To Rick, who's correcting one part of test & working on another: "I thought you were going to finish the test first (pleasantly)... Would you like to move to table at the back, where it's quieter?... Can you really work on rdg. comprehension here?" He says he can; stays.

To class "If you haven't finished, take it home & finish it... We're going to do the composition, but first I want to say a few things abt. wrtg. process... ~~He's brought in~~ Every time you write, write process." He's brought in process entry f. Runner. "I wasn't always gd. abt. wrtg. proc... but I want you to be." Reads short entry beginning "I'm black." Anthony: "I don't believe it." Anthony & Kurt talking while AA reads: "You heard that on the (radio)?" AA reads another entry f. j., abt. stops & starts, messiness of it. Anthony again mutters "I don't believe it." AA reads 1st draft of piece that goes c̄ that process. Says she abandoned that one; will read others f. Runner later in yr. if sts. ~~are~~ "are interested."

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Sts. listen. There is some sympathetic laughter at the descriptions of its Ts' reactions, ~~others~~ some Sts. listen, looking towards AA, who is standing toward opening of V of tables; others look down at tables or around rm. Anthony doodles, shows notebk. to Kerr.

AA reads one more proc. essay.

For Regents essay "You're going to look at those topics & make some sort of decision. Then write process essay abt. how you chose, what happened next: Did you stop & & then go on? Did you know where you were going to go w/ the topic before you started? Did you change ... the day ... detail etc. ~~Were~~ Were you distracted? ... try to describe how you feel ... Once that, can you compare it metaphorically to something else? It's such a hard thing to describe that people often use metaphors - I often do ... there are just hundreds of 'em ... I don't want to just give you a list; I don't even know all the 'em ..." (Lots more here that I couldn't catch.) Anthony: "Did you breathe?" AA "I would like you to try to describe what happens each time you write ... that way we will try to discover what makes writing easy - or easier."

AA "Turn to Regents essay topics. We don't have much time, but we

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can get a start. "John: It's time to go." (looks at clock) Anthony snickers at some of essay topics.

(At one pt. in class, Rose comes in & writes her name on board: Mrs. Verbeck. AA introduces her: "Most of you know Ms. Verbeck ... She is going to be w/ this class.")

Time runs out - bell rings - AA says to do prewriting at home. After class says she wishes she had ir- that th. seem confused. Wishes she had waited, had them write in class tomorrow. For rest of pds. she will do it that way - or perhaps ask them ~~ta~~ to correct tests at home, so that they can use class time on wrtg.

This leads to further comment on yesterday's analysis themes: that 1st pd. is a "rehearsal" for her (see p. 18): a time to find out what works & doesn't for the rest of the day. That she ~~change~~ changes & refines plan as day goes on.

Says again that teaching 11th grade is new for her; worries that experiences will fail, that things won't work out, that her lack of experience w/ this grade level will be bad for the research. When study was being planned, thought she wd. have diff.

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Sched., have time to work this out. I say that's okay, that whether it works out or not [illegible] we'll learn f. it.

We discuss [illegible] blow to confidence of ~~Bsch~~ sts. like John & Anthony, who may o'ever take Regents, of practice tests c̄ low scores. AA says dept. used to ~~have diff.~~ ~~treat~~ give diff. work to ~~the~~ Regents & RCT sts., but had recently decided everybody shld. practice ~~Som~~, so as ~~to~~ not to emphasize division more than nec. Because of scheduling prob., AA says she has "most" of the BOCES kids (those who take auto mechanics & other vocational courses at other times); most of the rest are in skills classes. Worries that 1) Regents practice will be hard on them (& noted, as I had, that John, Anthony & co. had been protecting themselves some by [illegible] laughing & joking abt. it) and 2) that, because of BOCES sts., test scores f. her classes will be [illegible] low, & ~~the~~ people (parents? administrators?) will blame them on "Bay Area." I sympathize — have had the same worries myself, around WAT — at which pt. AA says she really doesn't give a damn (her wds?? mine?) abt. Regents anyway.

Picks up Sandra's [illegible]

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abt. "rituals"; says that, because of new grade assignment, ~~uncer~~ uncertainty abt. Th., having to "run around getting bks." at the last minute etc. ("I didn't have my rituals" the first day.) That she had made a list (1st day I think) of why she was so upset abt. it all; & it came to 11 separate items. ~~Got. feelings of~~ Had some nice posters, but realized they were not suitable for 9th grade, didn't want to offend 11th graders by asking them to draw (as she'd done w/ 9th graders) etc. Showed me drawings of her career "mapping memory" exercises f. 2 yrs. ago (see p. 22), & we admired them together.

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9/23 Pd. 1 Day 11

3 rectangular tables arranged in an open square at front of room. 2 desks fill in the open side. Other 4 tables pushed against walls toward back.

AA asks sts. who have finished final drafts (of Regents essay) to gather around tables in front & those who haven't finished to work quietly in back.

Goes over scores on yesterday's usage test. Class totals (how many passed/or got 100%) written on board.

Asks sts. who have finished to hand in final drafts, w/ rough drafts; says she hadn't intended to collect all these ~~papers~~ drafts – a heavy load to carry home – but has decided that it's worth it; that she can understand more, if she has them. Collects papers.

Goes over usage test, commenting that some "correct" answers are "archaic usage." Asks sts. to rephrase particularly awkward constructions: "I don't listen to gossip about anyone (who, whom) I know," for inst., as "... anyone I know."

Ann Ryan goes to back table & works w/ two sts. who haven't finished.

AA asks sts. at table to respond, in writing, to questions on board, which she reads out loud, & comments:

1) In what ways did your group succeed in helping you to write or revise?

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2. In what ways did you think your group did not succeed?

3. How can your group improve?

Write for abt. 15 min.

AA: "Talk abt. it as if you were a human being & not a computer — That way it will be easier."

~~Our~~ 6 sts. are still working ~~at~~ complete work ~~tables in back~~; the rest (abt. 13) write response to qs., sitting either at front tables or finding places around rm. AA checks here & there, then sits at one of the front desks & writes.

~~AA~~ p̄ a while, AA calls sts. back to front table & asks for volunteers to read what they have written.

Todd: "They may confirm your feeling that something is gd. ... Could have been more critical of one another ... Could have tried to pinpoint, give advice about what, exactly, we should do to make it better."

Krista: (Reaction to negative criticism) "depends on who is saying it & how they say it..." "tone of voice... way you say it."

AA says she is convinced that "negative criticism is bad."

Todd says you should put your feelings out of the way; "the group is supposed to keep you."

AA: "Do you think you can do that?" (put feelings out of the way)

Sandra & Krista say no; you

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react to what people say & how they say it. AA: ~~[illegible]~~ Remember not to withdraw... not to take your voice f. you... You really have to keep in mind that the wrtr. owns his wrtg. ... When it satisfies you, that's the best of all others...

Krista: group made weren't rude abt. it. but had helpful suggestions, for inst. abt. the abrupt ending.

AA: sounds as if the writer took charge, asked for suggestions when she wanted them.

Sandra (same group) "listened well, were very open c̄ one another etc. but didn't look at wrtg. in depth". Picks up what Todd said, & adds that group cd. have looked more closely at parts or sections of papers.

: Maybe r [illegible] [illegible] ising.

Krista: If you don't like your paper in the first place, you may ō want to revise again & again.

AA "We did rush through this one— maybe 4 people are too many to give each one enough attention."

Krista No - you need at least 3 reactns.

Sandra "At some point, doesn't the wrtg. become the group's, ō your own?"

She "You have to be careful - there's a boundary line ~~betw~~ betw. your wrtg. & the group's work."

AA The wrtr. owns his/her wrtg.-

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can ask for & take advice, but the piece is still his/her.

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9/23 Len Pd. 6 Day 11

LS calls roll. 5 rectangular tables ~~in 2 rows~~ set up in 2 rows.

LS "How many of you feel that the topic you came up w/ yesterday is something you can write abt.?" ~~How many~~ Several hands go up. "How many have no idea what you are going to write abt.?" Many hands.

LS. "I feel I'm not in touch w/ you abt. what you are doing w/ this writing." Calls on Kenny.

Kenny: "I wrote a lot, but it's not v. interesting... isn't what I ~~want~~ want to write more abt."

St. ~~I don't~~ Doesn't want to stay w/ what he was writing. "It's boring."

LS "How many are staying w/ the topics you gave me last wk.?" Sev. ~~ha~~ hands go up.

LS. talks abt. writing a personal topic: "What you know best. I sense that you're resisting that." Scott agrees.

LS. says he had intended to put sts. in writing groups w/ what they wrote yesterday, but now isn't sure.

Jeff "It's like a part of yourself... you're opening yourself up, inviting people to take a pot shot at it."

LS How do you feel abt. your writing group?

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Jeff: "I went to the beach yester-
day" is personal but okay; other
things you wouldn't want to share.
LS: "Some things that are per-
sonal I'd never want to tell any-
body; ~~some people~~ others I'm willing to talk abt. in wrtg. grp.; I'm willing to take risks, be-
abt. ^ ~~(in wrtg. group)~~ others are
cause
willing to take risks too." gives ex-
amples of kinds of personal know-
ledge you might use w/ revealing
more than you want to; high-
[illegible] for light.; for him.
LS: "The goal is to get to a topic
that you think you can write abt.
& write abt. well." — that you can
write abt. f. sev. pts. of view.
~~A. Ss~~ LS: "How can you write abt.
something you haven't experienced
yourself?"
St.: "You told Brian he couldn't
write abt. cars, & that's what he
knows abt."
LS: "When did I tell Brian he
couldn't write abt. cars? If you
want to write abt. cars, that's fine.
~~(gives examples)~~ -- abt. how to ~~build~~
build an engine ... abt. the time
you drove down 28A or 95 mph ...
etc."
LS: "I'm going to be less careful than
my instructor is telling me — going to
that you." Asks sts. to get into

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groups, read to each other, ask ō -
evaluative qs. "If you don't ~~want~~
want to read, tell your group."

I ask their permission & I sit c̄ Jeff, Scott, Marie.
Scott says what he was writg. yesterday)
has nothing to do c̄ what he wants
to work on. Also ~~it~~ that he doesn't
want to spend so much time on one
story (point of view): ~~Also~~ "It would
be boring." Marie says what she
wrote yesterday was boring; she
doesn't want to go on c̄ it. Jeff
talks abt. trip he is planning.

Scott says he is going to write
science fiction, but hasn't decided
what yet. Jeff says he will write
abt. time he "got thrown out of the
house." Scott: "Yeah, really? You
got thrown out of your house? How
come? What happened? You're
going to write abt. your mother?
Why?" etc.

Jeff "You remember, that
time I met you..." (describes
incident.)

Marie (to Scott) "Why do you
have to write abt. science fiction?
~~Scott~~ Why don't you write abt.
drugs?" "Just kidding."
c̄ awhile ~~[illegible]~~ → - I ask ~~[illegible]~~ Scott if he's going
to answer Marie's q. abt. sci. fiction.
He says "Because it's fun."

1-28

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Jeff says he has some doubts abt. wrtg. process stuff: wrtg. depends on creativity – it just comes – you can't force it. I sd sure, but the guidelines are an attempt to help it along etc. He says p̄ doing the guidelines he realized that he didn't want to write abt. any of the topics he listed, but came up c̄ the one he described above. I said it can work that way, too.

Lots of qs. abt. my note-taking in this sm. group: what can I wrtg. down? etc.

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9/24 Dy 12 Pd 6 Len

Tables arranged in square, open in the middle. As 2 come in (a few minutes late) Len is discussing his process c̄ St. to his right, who has apparently listened actively. They go around square, each St. [illegible] listening & responding out loud to St. to his/her left.

St "was scared for a while - couldn't decide what to write"... then found something & is now happy abt. it. Len asks "How did that happen?" St. says she hadn't understood at 1st that it wasn't to be research; felt better when she realized she could write abt ~~the~~ volleyball. Tells some of experience: big game c̄ Miller Ave... put in at last minute -- scored goal."

Joe: couldn't decide whether to write abt. something he knows or "write a story." ~~Len~~ asks if anyone can ask qs. that might help Joe talk abt. it.

Len: "There are lots of people who haven't decided what to write abt., & that's O.K." p̄ 1st response,

p̄ next st., ~~Len~~ he asks again "Can anyone ask a q. that will get Tom to talk abt. it?" As Tom begins to talk abt. his process, LS: "Tom has just discovered something - that's good."

Neil ~~S~~. says he is going to write abt. fight he had, but will "change some things." F. ~~st~~. across the rm. - "To ~~make~~ make it so you win!" Neil says he

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will add things "to make it more interesting" & "so that I come out better."

Joanne: "Ideas flowed, but when I sat down to write, my mind went blank." So nice to say that's important "abt. her." Laughter. Joanne: "It's embarrassing." LS "I get the feeling in the group that we're getting to a point where we're willing to trust one another ... The laughter was sympathetic."

St. says she too had trouble getting started: "just sat & stared at page for 45 mins. It got her mad."

Another "jumped around" fr. one subj. to another, couldn't settle on one.

LS "Know what that's called?"

St. "Writer's block"

LS "Or getting stuck. It happens to everyone, even if you've written a lot before ... I wrote 11 pages; don't think I'm going to use any of them. But knew I had to write them first." Goes into "discovery" a bit, reviewing what sev. sts. have said: "Kim knew what she wanted to write abt., had even written abt. it c, but still couldn't get started ... Joanne said ..." etc.

Bob says to Marie, "You should try ~~[illegible]~~ to ..." LS "Stop! Bob, don't tell her what to do. Can you think of a question that would help her think?"

Jeff sketches: "When I got thrown out of my house, 60" St. "Do you want

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to elaborate?"

Jeff looks at LS while responding to Scott. LS to get "talk to him."

LS "I have a gd. feeling abt. what has happened today ... everyone ~~was~~ who read—& everyone else, too, I'm sure, was v. serious ... gd. feeling in rm. ... laughter ... best class we've had."

They break to get tables back to position they must be left in.

LS to cr. "I really thought that was a great class."

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to elaborate?"

Jeff looks at LS while responding to Scott. LS "I get" talk to him."

LS "I have a gd. feeling abt. what has happened today ... Everyone ~~was~~ who read - & everyone else, too, I'm sure, was v. serious ... gd. feeling in me... laughter ... best class we've had."

They break to get tables back to position they must be left in.

LS to Ct. "I really thought that was a great class."

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Day #9

1115 Kids clean up from snacks, moving around to get writing books, replace lunch boxes, and gather supplies

Tucker to Craig "I have a spider bag" as they stand at cubby area. T jumps and runs about, not focusing on the fact it's time for writing — (kids know that writing comes between snack & lunch)

9/~~2~~(21) [redacted] selects the story she has been working on and settles to continue in her normal seat.

9/21 [redacted] runs across to get his dinosaur book, sprawling on the rug mid flight.

Some thermoses & lunch boxes still out. Some draw and some use pencils (and erasing?)

R.P. works with Jeremy & Sondra at round table... I notice most kids are on their own, less groupy — though 2 girls near Mrs. P & Jeremy watch them.

girls at round t. chant

Hello, what your name
Mary Jane
What do you eat
Pigs feet

What do you drink?
bottle of ink
(Craig authority)

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Another girl skips back from pencil sharpener. a feeling of relaxed concentration - not oppresive

Jeremy as Mrs. P. leaves —
"Who wants to see a funny picture?"
(one of the 2 nearby girls) - Me —

9/21 [redacted] comes over to show me her story. Asks me to write a line in & then points to a series of 27 dashes and recites

"My elephant is in his barn he likes to eat peanuts. I hope he is there"

VR RP Mrs. Pek or Mr. Carter will help you if they can (a signal for assistance and sharing?)

9/21 A moment later I join [redacted] and I turn back from the page he is on to the 1st page he "reads" 1st page that Mrs. Pekala had helped him with Then I write in as he recites the next page. I turn over to the next page — and he pauses to think (30 sec)

Same approach, for next pages.

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Rolen Oct 26, 1981 1st Full Day - 7c

Day 30

9am - R.P gives us a copy of article from BH+G = wants to see if this is something she could send to parents.

Kids are "putting things away please" + "take your seats + take out your H.W." Kids are finding out what today is.

Personally good mornings each to each a respond. 3 kids at library.

"Our helper today is Jeremy, - J would you like to come up + put up our pumpkin — R "Let the calendar helper you decide what day of the wk it is — Today is . . . Monday.

Would you pl stand + let Jeremy lead us in the pledge. Kids stand and one (Jaime) tells a vacation story — it gets quiet "OK, J. is waiting for us boys + girls — They recite pledge - clearly + quietly. "Th you, J." Then J Takes card to Nurse — (struggles to open door) R.P. circles to ✓ penmanship practice. David over during this to straighten lunch boxes — very ceremoniously.

Buzz "Craig + Shawn you have to go down to speech."

H.W. is letters (g, d, 3-letter words) -

9:14 [redacted] shares her 1st published book Space 10/26

sits on cubby shelf — reads 1st page + then shows dr. to class. R. stands at bd. + helps her sound out words now + then >> 2 ft to her R.

holds up one page with only drawing. She leads her off the cubby shelf w/ her arm around.

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(Twice Jaime has said aloud to me + RP ("You're not supposed to be here now)".

Explains Alternatives (because it is raining outside) of what kids can do during ~~recess~~ lunch time.

choices are

eg Arts and Crafts
Game Room 1
Game Room 2
Ball Games
Ping-Pong Jump Rope
Library

} 12 can go - 3 may choose to stay here.

Therese has left to tend to arm at Nurse

R.P. places their names on bd in proper spots.

helper goes 1st (J & A+C) Then Alphabetical list - Refers to names + rules. Kids make choices. serious stuff.

C+L - will select 1 to L. one to stay.

9:26 go over sounds. She displays cards. Shouts + rapid pace. Real good all loudly back out 12 or so initial sounds ( )

Pam sound ch (cherries) card. Then sounds out more ch words

Trick + treat. "Want me to play a trick on you or do you want to give me a treat?" - She tells long time ago a story.

Models harmless T+T - explains bad things (eggs + ...) Kids tell egg story -

Kelli "I don't like this T+T time - cause its sad.)

they get ch + tr sound confused (trauma travel + track truck)

on board checkers cherries cheerios > now we have a problem we have two C's C + ch.

chick chili chilly

So if you have a letter w/ a c on it, you better look at what comes next"

R.P. explains to L+C alternatives "means you have a choice"

30. Today we are looking at what sound today?

R.P. sounds out a whole lot more

DAy 49 [redacted] "listening table" 120

on Robby – we move to back table by lunch boxes. He has a couple of yellow construction sheets. I ask him what he is doing.

"Just doing pictures – and when I finish doing them and then I'll make a story."

Now he cuts corners off the 1st drawing – a pencil drawing of "A boy Indian" – "this is the pilgrim" – I'm not all finished yet" – (Adds short design on Pilgrim – buttons

JC "What else?" I'm making the button.

R "This is just a reg pix because I wrote on both sides" (ignores it and starts on another drawing)

Now R up for a "problem" with Natasha on something of his she has – an arrowhead. We discuss its slate beauty and examine a tile fragment – a "sharpener", for the arrowhead

I ask after and he pulls it from pocket. ←

Now he works on a sketch "another page." In lower left corner he's drawn a pencil "a pilgrim shooting a rifle" He's cut two corners upper & l. right and now staples 4 short corners to another blank page. He shows 2nd page "It's a pilgrim growing corn –"

JC Ok Why don't we write that down? Where would it go? "R. I don't know" – he goes off to cubby hole and now half pulls it out & searches for pencil – singing to himself. Now draws a turkey – across from us is Kelli & Denise

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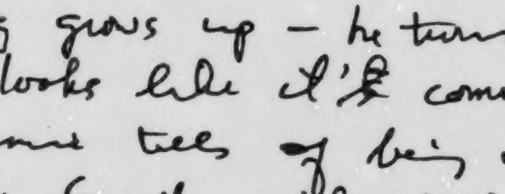
~~[illegible]~~

(there is a line from gun to Turkey)

He shot the turkey" sets drawing aside. And
now pauses before a blank paper - "What happens
next - A new story?" - R yeah - I smile
make eye contact interest at him and then he bends to draw.
head bent - left arm, bent at elbow, resting comfortably.
distracted by K+D ← - ~~[illegible]~~ write about the omlet - after the
egg grows up - he turns into an omlet" -
moments later It looks like it's coming around."

- Denise tells of being up 'til 3 -
she + family sick. K+D both wired

Now Robby focuses and I try too: "What
is this?" - R. It's a house ... (Clever, Carter)



K+D Now they discuss my marital status, what are all
those ntbks - started by talk of "secret diary" talk

R. on above sketch "I drew it better than I thought I could"

(Kelli announces her # of published books)

R. I only have one published bk - well
it's better than none. "The hunter and
the turkey" - title of 1st published bk. → I ask title

adds "cannons" to the left of the house
→ D + Kelli look at his b+w comp book

R. ← "I make a story in there - when I was
about 4"

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Thumper visits **Day 140** 5/5/82 272

Reba Today - it's such a beautiful day
Time the cow come out
What else?

← Craig's
devil
cross

The season is spring - lot of th happening
So today (rater) ... nice warm day out
I thought ... but)
Kid's discuss what to do w/ Thumper outside

Lots of new little babies out there
Right outside our window - big cherry tree
Go around + look at things
Like a garden is starting to grow
Lauren "I don't see any cherry tree."

Write about anything you like outside
(couple kids have) Passed out a new booklet. (red)
917 If you would like, take a pencil
7 I call over Craig for his Craig hug.
I give Craig his "hug. He does. → He wants Dean to have a Dean hug - but D. is shy
- Natascha + I discuss Thumper + going outside → I agree not to write things down.
921 Reba brings in J.S. 12 eggs which are incubating (for 8 days) → I'm wondering whether he will come to her if he gets loose outside.
explains fertilized eggs Craig - Oh can I have one (4x)
- Some with babies - others are "duds" 1-40

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273

9^{24} Reba returns J.S incubating eggs.

VRR.P. OK so those are some ideas you can write about today

look at the trees – the clover –

R. Are the cherries out yet? Is it crabapple? –

kids ask too. don't know yet

outdoors We look at the garden together. several of onions are up

→ We chatter. Jeremy, Kelli, Denise at the metal picnic bench north of the map drawn on playground.

Jeremy: How did you get yr name on your belt? to Kelli

she explains

Denise is working on story ↓ = Kelli + Jeremy not.

D. The sun is fun to play ... 2 min later "The sun comes up now"

D: What are you going to be writing about? → She announces each page as she completes it

Kelli – Nothing –

Jeremy plays on the map of U.S. – "this is real deep" – stands in great lakes. – "I better go wash off the quicksand." He's inventing games with the map.

K. "Jeremy you step in quicksand!" – As he walks around on the yellow state lines.

Rest of class ~~settle~~ is over at swings area. in the shade

D. The sun fights with the cloud –

Kelli – Oh – Oh – She has an idea
starts to work ..

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14 kids on the case.

M = Kind.
Tues - [illegible]
Wed normal
Th - Field Trip 304

Day 160 6/3/82

Total 1
Dino[illegible]

Natasha has brought in 3 chicks in a stainless basket and As I came kids are still visiting them

9:20 - (conditions) Reba + I chat about:

① Big-Pen Plan - should celebrate on Tues.

② Next wk's schedule

③ The writing plan for today (an anthology of dinosaur stories)

Reading Machine

Tucker * "So what?" → Rebecca's phrase[illegible]

Reads like blotting paper — though not comprehending or just does so for "duty" to do his part to move the class along. Now he fills out another feet - leaving it to Dean to train.

I would like to talk about some special writing

- Calls for them to get settled, organized —

R.P. Craig, would you straighten up yr. dino pix?

I like the way Amy cleaning up. And Jeremy is beginning to clean up + Jamie is cleaning up — Craig you need to finish cleaning up a little bit now.

- # of kids are cutting up their dinosaur footprints - several (Tucker, Chris etc) are eager to go down + (7 more to go) - Reba's surprise - a dinosaur cake - won't be ready til Tues.

9:25 - Many of you are getting older and getting closer to 2nd + we're learning a lot - "About 2nd [illegible]" - one kid volunteers one of the diff. ways they write in 2nd grade — Sometimes they all write about one thing

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- copy it off — and make up everybody's stories.

Dean Oh I know it was in kindergarten when we did a counting lesson

- Since I thought so hard on dinosaurs

+ playing [illegible] 2nd gr — maybe we could get one of those

Who did not live with dinosaurs

I'm going to make
cavemen
Smurfs
family

Dumber D. + the D. ?
Neighborhood rode him

have him on yr. hockey team

Thanks Jean!

Ask the diff. kinds of dinosaurs
Write a story about what you learned
Triceratops – 3 horns
Bronto – likes water

Uses 2 Dick stories.

Craig | How do you do Dinosaur
What's your name
1-43

Made up

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⑩

Day 2

1047

All are taking places in the grotto (the stairs) AG facing them perched on stool, wearing purple slacks, white flowered blouse and suede shoes. Mrs. Orth, the st. t., sits at table next to and behind her. AG reads 1st one of yesterday's (4's) unfinished compositions "Who am I?" kids are quiet, some munching apples, peaches

AG : Who do you think it is? She calls upon a few kids to help her read an indecipherable word - they can't get it (was clothes) They guess the kid.

AG "Alright, here's another one

"I want to be a... I know what it is...

A mechanic (some struggle, same solution method) kids are getting into this, raising hands and guessing at the author.

A.G. John, who do you think it is?

J: "It's me! (calls on himself) laughter from AG and others

A.G. Alright, here's the next one" Pause for quiet & gets control

Mrs. Orth now sits on step at the wall next to a girl snacking.

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(11)

"Oh, I know what it is" says a kid as she tries to focus on another during the guessing, bleeding their hands fly up [illegible] "I [illegible]. (note I have [illegible] (changes) [illegible])

[illegible] Kinsmed, won't [illegible] clues" I [illegible] (lazy) [illegible] (raised his hand as if were guessing the author to disguise the fact he was)

✓ E.G. "[illegible] forbid us."

v.k. E.G. "I need you to listen. Can you find yourself a spot ..." (gets order)

Intro. of Journals "a special book"

"You can write anything you want" "these are yours" - you can design your own covers "they belong to you"

"We will write for" 10 minutes almost every day" You can 'share' or you don't have to share.

1st qs? Can you use it like a school diary?

BS? Can you write in it if you have any free time during the day?

brief affirmative

BS? "What if you can't think of anything to write?

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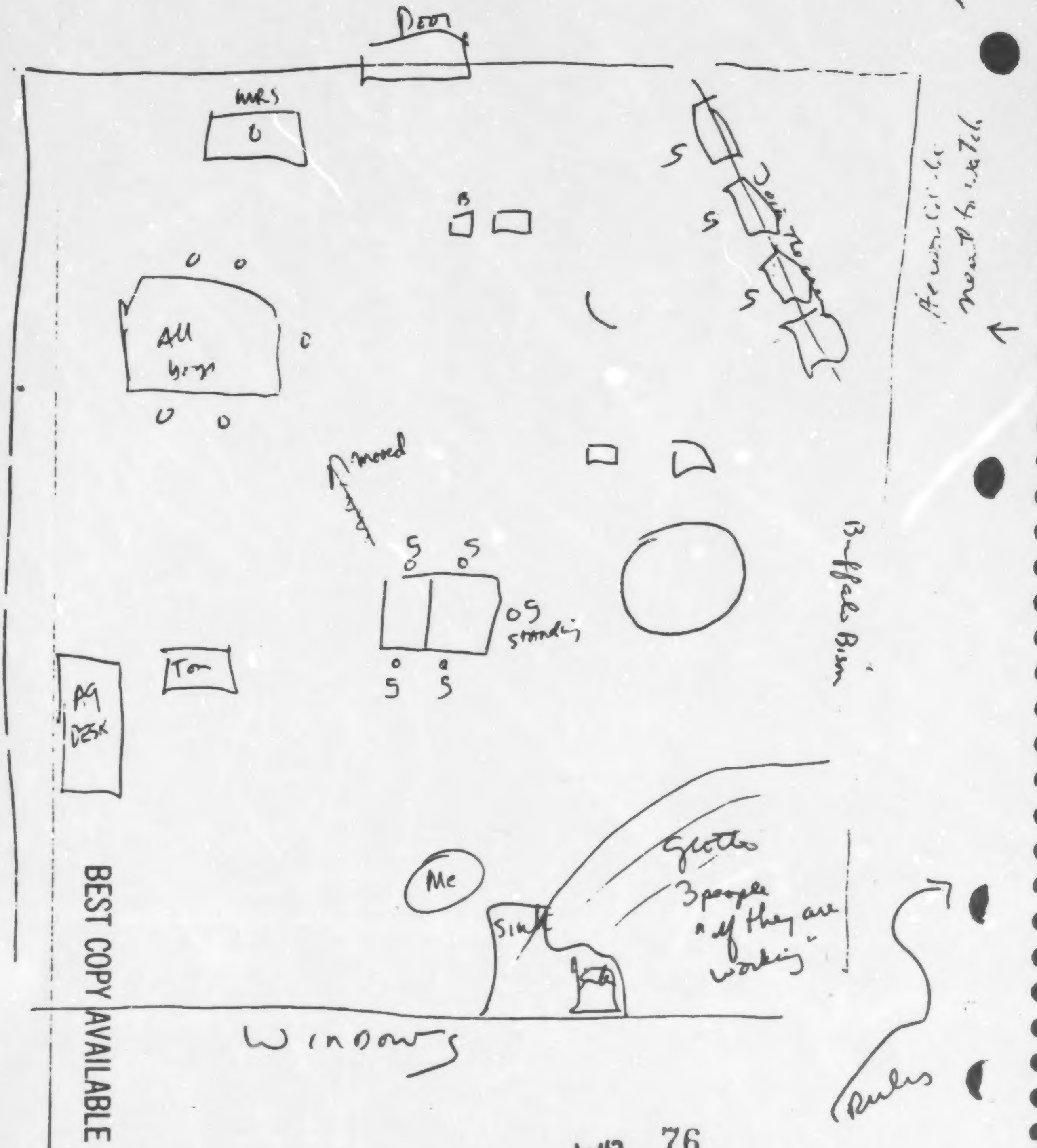
T2

FG 'You can doodle - and you never have to share it with anyone.
→ (your writing)

GS? Can we have extra time?
FG. If you like - just ask.
Repeats general instructions "go ahead & design your cover and write. Go back to sketch and decide on the cover
GS? Can we keep it plain?
FG. Sure just put your name on it somewhere.
Hands them out and they rush to their seats. Very smooth, very low-key

Kids are using pencil, magic markers (which they were instructed to get from her upper left desk drawer)
Cindy (tog) "I'm making it plenty & curvy"
FG to a small pocket of SS, said softly,
"I get one ~~too~~, 'cause I'm going to write in the journal too
Miss Beth stays on the step with her journal but now crosses the room to take her seat by her name plate. (see map next page) & she is wearing plaid

shows members
community of
writers


Door
MRS
All
boys
Join The
moved
OS
standing
Buffalo Bison
Tom
AG
DESK
Me
Sink
Grotto
3 people
"if they are
working"
WINDOWS
Rules

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Day 48

Follow up on Eric.
12^50 - 1^00 Journal writing
1 - 1^20 Publication
1^20 - ^45 Sharing
1^45 - 2^35 Art.

- I greet all, as they begin their journal w. I hear from Kenny that ~~[illegible]~~ Jennie is "dead" so I go over to her to offer her my farewells - since I surmise she'll be dead Tuesday. We shake hands good bye...

Earlier, as I walk in, I mention to AG I want to follow up on Eric

In class -

8 pp. 3 chapters Cindy story (sharing) Lydia Henners

JC Idea "From a book?" - C. I call it getting an idea from a book" - Story about a little Amish girl - talks about the Lancaster farm, the house, b+sisters, ma+pa - Lydia making a rug. -> she adds such details

Cindy explains if it is fact she uses it. Sometimes changes fact "wood" not "stone" house. (ex)

JC Why do you change the facts? - Because I don't like to copy and I like my own fiction. I don't like their fiction -"

JC What's fiction - like make-believe stuff. My fiction - it could be true - but it's not. (not real / since as I / try to pin her / down? / f.)

Chris (overhearing my way of ?ing) - says I should do a talk show -
Cindy "Getting all that, getting all that?

JC On Copying... - C "Then like it, you could just read the book - It's not like yr. own story - but I like to get ideas - Then word could turn into that word for me

1st draft of 6pp has some surface corrections = sp + caps.

She ex, plans > She starts with "most of all the words, The idea" - 1st 4pp. + then leaves it behind all to her own story.

She shows me her 2 pages of 2nd draft.

JC Any changes? Yeah - I'm going to leave out of a few sentences = How? Takes out what she "doesn't like". JC Q How come?

Answer: If, when she reads, she doesn't like a passage, She'll skip it - "description" not action parts get skipped over - not interesting.

T → E. has allowed this inter. as he is writing in his journal

Eric: → We address + follow up the P.A. of last

11/23 How was the experience of making the presentation on the P.A

It was scarey - ? P.A.

How come?

Well... because the whole school was listening (asks me to read close) chuckles.

Good job? Yeah. Anything else?

Well, not exactly, but, the only thing I was scared

JC Was Ritchie a help — (corrects ± sp. of Richie.)

"He held the microphone to my mouth so I could read."

I ask for copy - he checks w/ Richie + returns. he thinks it's thrown away -

↓

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Day 153 5/24/82 323

Schedule
12⁵⁰-1⁰⁰ Journal
1-1³⁰ get letters on all papers
1³⁰-1⁴⁵ sharing
1⁴⁵-2³⁵ art

Kenny S shows me the laminated religious card he has commemorating his grandmother (died May 14, 1982). I tell him about "getting the same kind of card" when my g. died. He tells me she was "buried on top of my grandfather"

Earlier I returned 2 books + joked w/AG about their plot + character depth + law. Kenny S hands me *The Lost Jewels of Nabooti* to read.

AG is going to "date the pieces in the Big Book" She'll "estimate" the dates = "Round off to the month." Ah, accurate research!

John is freaking out about non-working staple gun...

12⁵⁸ AG "I think some staplers have it in for us, John"
↳ a dear commiseration based upon earlier stuff re staple gun.

AG: "Tom hit two kids on the minibus" — (last Fri — after F. Trip to Stony Brook Museum)

Eric + Matt M ← "They bled" cracks me up.

"Tues 8 AM — parents into town.

We giggle — "terrible

- Tom + Kevin boxing gloves / AM gym
Elaine, Kevin's [illegible] — kids formed "wall on ambulance come"

AG: "helps put it into perspective"

at museum
- fled (beat them)
- dip candles
- 2hr lecture —
(set up Tom's troubles?

6-7 minutes of fighting
stopped a Kevin: "When I'm exhausted — let quit — and be friends"

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I ask Kevin what happened.

"No other boys in the 4th grade like Tony —"

Kevin defends Tom (during lunch)

(Can I depend on you...?) "Tire & Tony aren't going to fight no more"
↳ Kevin assures her.

AG VK "Are you willing to have Mr. Carter have yr. writing folders & journals — over the summer?" to class — John the only one who shows hesitation — he wants to make sure he gets his

Kids shift to [illegible] "Mr. G." "can I share" (2x)?

Matt. & John up to bd to chalk on names

Kenny B
Matt B
John C

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1" "I think it's time we did some more publishing." AG to class

"Did you know that I published!" → "One Exciting Morning" — Kenny B
"that's when we had an indoor pool" — refers to story
↳ couple of Fridays ago 5/14 = "that's my third"

Day 3 11-11^{45} scheduled: Introduction of free writing to ss

- All quietly at work in room. Voices subdued, completing worksheets (see folder), whispering together. Children scattered throughout room (see map)

B.S. "Do I have everyone's math?" chatter — Turns off lights in classroom. Room gets quiet—suggesting t. has instructed them thusly to quickly give him their attention. Mildly," Some of you have been sitting for 45 minutes so stand + shake" Then he instructs them to bring their "one-subject spiral" and something to write with over to the rug area.

Lights back on. "I'll give you a minute to bring those over to the rug area"

Now noisy. Lockers being opened and slammed shut, pencil being sharpened, voices and movement shifting to rug area

We are all taking seats. Two have brought their pillows over. Dean shows me the design (Sketch) on his writing book and tells me

"[illegible]"

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Day 3

he has written a book which took "9 months to write" + looks up ~~fon~~ for that statement's dramatic impact. I express astonishment and we agree to talk about it. He sits to my right and I rest against the right front corner of the file cabinet, half on rug and floor.

B.S "I'd like you to put your name in three places" on their spirals he begins.

Writes ~~September 11~~ on board
9/11

"Whenever you write in here you have to date it" He is still standing at the board with all the rest of us settling down on rug. (see ill.)

"We talked about reading diaries and about what happens?" (they respond "We improve our reading through reading". We also mentioned journals and we said the same thing about writing ("we improve our writing)

One type of writing is (writes on board) FREE Writing - says we'll be doing a lot this year and that some other teachers call it "non-stop writing" or (Len. S) "SSW" - has one kid expl.

"[illegible]"

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Day 3

SWR (Sustained Writing & Reading) and
SSW (Silent Sustained Writing)
Begins instructions "Start & don't stop" O.K.,
we'll do it for 10 minutes – "if you get
stuck"... "couple of things to do"
(1) Write the last word (eg beach, write 4 or 5 x)
says in H.H.'s class yesterday that he had
trouble writing and wrote "Race" several times.
another is to write "I don't know what
to write" or "I'm stuck"
s? "What if you stay stuck?"
t. "Oh, usually after 3 or 4 x and you
get unstuck"
s? Can it be just ~~to~~ sentences?
T. (Reviews Rules)
#1 Keep writing
#2 It's silent – We have 22 here
"have it be as if you ~~were~~ are alone"
"No talking, No signalling with a friend"
"Concentrate on yourself" "If you talk you
are going to bother someone else"
Lisa ?" Can I go to the bathroom?"
she does.

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'acts nappish'

Day 3

12

"Today I want to set it up you for your freewriting."
Oh, (interrupts himself) there's one more
thing I forgot — don't worry about
" spelling, punctuation, capital letters"
it's for you — "I can figure out what you
meant" - "just write the words as they pop up"

Now get up, find a comfortable place on
the rug - "I suggest you spread out" lots
of movement as ss scatter throughout
room.

"Don't start writing yet, pens + pencils
should be down — put everything down"
(he stalls, waiting for Lisa) says so
"Ah, one thing that you should know
is that I want to write too, so I want
to not have to worry about what you're
doing so I can concentrate."
Lisa enters room - he sighs in relief.
" Put down your pens and pencil And
I'd like you to close your eyes —(5 sec. pause)
mild v. "We just finished summer vacation
Think back through the summer" think
of a time that was good for you.

*ists nappesh

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Day 140 5/5/82

10^{15} - As I sit in empty B.S. class he & H.H. kids write outdoors. I write up R.P.'s notes – Jennifer Chan comes in from library to get a pen – her class should return c 10^{45} – . Bill leans against tree, writing in the sun — kids are dotted about on the little hill north of him. Nice scene.

B.S. 10^{34} "OK, everybody, let's go!"

10^{40} - Kids (H.H.) & B.S. share on their "incredible Hofbrails" – BS 1st – 'cold tukkus' sat in the sun (teaching insight)

B.S. VR 10^{52} "My people" - Quiet time Stuff – Come over to the Rug.
→ This is as H.H. kids depart.
I want to do Q.T. – came

It's morning – We haven't gone out in the AM. ground – pretty wet – area is shady. Notice these kinds of diff.. How is your area diff.
3-4 X around 2 o'clock

Note to yourself
Pay atten –
Don't have to do
anything w/ them
Just notice
them

How's my area diff
wet a day ?
temp. diff ?
What things are the same –

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102

Sondra joins us — in Rug area

[illegible] [illegible]

time for Share = No time to stay another

Bud Tom AM — "think it's important

Spend a couple of minutes — Think about

anything you've done — (talk about)

w HH Nolan "Very interesting" — the diff ways you did

same thing. — Recording

drawings

all senses (Give

Concentrating on sensory Recording

drawing & writing —

Set, time limit.

Supposed to

Go ahead & find your spot

~~[illegible]~~

Bud, Sondra, I survey the writing scene. Lisa, Emily, Jennifer

Chris — farthest east. write amidst a flush of yellow

flowers — so beautiful a spot. Tries to avoid the bees

Lisa will work on drawing corner. Emily looks to be writing.

Jennifer + I talk powderpuff + dandelions.

Irwin w/ David L's brother Kevin to see if D is ok —

John is up a tree —

Chris is right out of Mark Twain.

I lean on a borrowed S. lion tree.

Should begin write.

We ended

after catching up a bit

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Sandra had asked about
when they might share
Tomorrow. Ari by tomorrow
so time is timely. B.S.
wonders whether the writing
is any diff. for the
change in setting.

The sun warms my
front as I nestle in
the bend of the three
knotty trunks. My eyes
are pressed downward
and close tight with the
the brightness of the sun
above & the whiteness of
my paper below.

Matt H is in shade - reading a book -
Jennifer Capute upset slightly because she has
discovered a dead charred bird in her area - We
examine the carcass - and she flicks it away & sits
nearby. Couple of kids sit on the crest of the little
ridge behind me. Now a breeze cools my
left side - running the length of my left forearm
like wind rippling a loose sail. A fluttering of the
breeze.

What is Q.T. to these kids? It's by yourself in your own
time to write to draw - to notice things - to look at differences
similarities - How does sharing fit in with that? It's
nice to hear the birds about the business of being birds.
Also to plug in the senses to the land.

Now Matt H. seems to be writing.

B.S. OK. About 5 minutes, folks!

VR

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Excerpts from Teaching Journals

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From the Teaching Journal of Diane Burkhardt

Sept. 15 PM.

First study group.meeting. Write reaction to proposal..... and to what's gone on so far. Is it trite to say that I'm thrilled to be part of this. Up until my reading of the proposal several days ago I had only thought of this whole thing in terms of the benefit to me. That's still my primary focus but it struck me as I was reading just what the potential for this project is nationally. Mainly though, I read the specific goals, questions, activities, responsibilities etc. and become very excited at the things I'm going to learn through this. ~~[illegible]~~ It gives me a ~~sense~~ Feeling of importance which I may not like to acknowledge but it's there.

I love the observations... I've been wanting some type of observation for a long time. Sondra and I have barely discussed any specifics of what she sees, but I'm anxious to do so. I guess I'm very interested to know how her perceptions of my classes and mine are similar or different. One thing which surprises me is how little I'm aware that she's there.

This is disjointed but if someone else were to read it, I'd want them to walk away with the idea that I am very happy and excited about what's happening.

* * *

I wish I hadn't known this topic ahead of time.

I want to get on with the specifics of what we're doing.

I want to be sensitive to the needs of the others in this group.... some people's lives

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TUESDAY #2

9-22-81

Everytime I read articles related to writing research I am struck by how much there is to know. I see myself as one of those who usually doesn't even know the right questions to ask let alone know any answers. I guess my intellectual goals are ~~to~~ at least to learn the questions — or some of them — ~~and keep myself attuned to th~~ and let myself hear them ~~inside myself. The ISZED article made me think~~ frequently and be guided by them. ~~When I~~ What Graves says about the relationship between teachers and researchers is very important. ~~How many others are like me — so caught up in the day-to-day business of the classroom that I take little time to reflect and fit things into a total picture.~~ Usually I do things for a specific purpose but ~~I'm not sure my~~ I'd like to frame my specific purposes with the important questions about composing processes.

This isn't necessarily closely related but one of the things that interests me most is the ~~total [illegible] context~~ for a child's writing and beyond the classroom — the role of writing in his family context. ~~[illegible]~~ What do we think we can do anyway to counter a home/family/community ~~[illegible]~~ environment where writing is not considered important. I guess

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One of the things we can look at is that issue and try to ~~fram~~ learn how the two environments interact.

[I've lost the thread of P, I, or E goals.] A very ~~narrow~~ specific goal (~~specific~~ rather than narrow) is to figure out how to help my students re-define their notion of composing process what it involves when it takes places or what it means to write about it. This is a personal goal in that it relates to my classroom but it i

I think I may have mentioned this before but ~~a~~ I want to ~~ta~~ take more time to reflect on what I do from day to day — that's personal.

Do I want to publish or spread the word as to what I/we learn. I guess if we can keep it from being the "~~exportable classroom~~" sort of thing — yes. But if we are truly ethnographic we won't try to do that anyway.

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- Consider our questions
- How do we frame ~~the~~ our questions in order to help us see what we have to do to to [illegible] find out what we want to know.

on process

~~If~~ I have a basic question as to how to spread my joy ~~and~~ in exploring ~~my~~ and documenting my composing process to my students. What do I need to know in order to ~~achieve~~ understand how to do this?

- I need to know more about what they presently think it means to "write process" or As they say "to process it" As in "Shall we process this piece after we write it Mrs. Burkhardt?"

It seems that I have gone out of my way so far to avoid have them write process entries on their own. Maybe I need to let them write what they think it is. Then I can use what they write as research data. (One drawback in this is the fear that they will become even more turned off to doing it than they presently are.) But I certainly need more ~~data~~ info from them.

Where do I go from here? Seems like I would have to find out what they think first. ~~If they have a~~ I could explore this line forever but I'm off the track.

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(63

[illegible]

11-23

RESEARCH PLAN

I'm feeling very comfortable about the questions I've decided to focus on. For a long time it was hard for me to separate the questions — everything seemed so tied together. which, of course, it is! But there are several aspects of the composing process which interest me more as far as in depth study is concerned.

① Why do kids write what they write? When I give them free choice as to topic/ theme/ mode, etc. ~~what~~ how do they arrive at what they write about?

② I'm especially interested in the Gendlin/Perl concept of "felt sense" as basic to the composing process. and as it relates to topic selection and development. I think this will be challenging but interesting to explore with my early adolescent case studies. Maybe I can really learn something about this sense in the kids I'm working closely with and with all my students.

Will it be possible to use Sondra's composing guidelines with kids? What will happen when we do?

③ To what degree do kids plan before they write? ~~or~~ what planning takes place in the midst of drafting?

④ Tied closely to all of these is the idea of purpose in writing. Do kids have a purpose

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similar to intention?

which underlies a piece of writing — a point to make? a message to communicate? How is purpose related to the topic selection and to the "felt sense"? When the concept of purpose is introduced what impact does it have on the writing? Is it constraining? ~~Is it a help or hindrance?~~

⑤ When kids revise, how do they view it? To what degree do they revise to please themselves, to please others (either peers or adults).
What does "revising to make it better" mean to the kids? Can kids be more attentive to their "felt sense" in the revision process than in drafting the piece initially? What actually goes on during revision?

~ ~ ~

When kids begin writing again (after Poe is finished) I want to follow closely at least 2-3 of my case study kids... from start to finish with composing alouds for drafts, revisions, etc. I think Sonora or I should do "guidelines" with at least the 6. (maybe with the whole class?) (voluntary?)

Times to meet.

I can easily meet Chris any day after school. Margaret Kathy & Brian every other week because of alternating early & late practice schedule. Tim and Matt are harder to get. Margaret, Kathy, & Chris do Not want advisory conferences to be writing conferences unless they have 2√ conferences

1-6 advisory 4

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1

December 1

Looking through ~~evaluations~~ written in June, '81. I was looking for a quote or two that might be useful in the reading council presentation tomorrow night, — specifically quotes on writing groups. What I found was a lot of wonderful stuff on the value of publishing. Oh, I found good comments on writing groups, peer conferences, etc. But what the kids wrote about publishing, especially about publishing their own magazines" overwhelms me. I'm glad I re read these tonight. I now think that we should forego(?) (forge?) a second class magazine in favor of doing individual magazines both in March and in June. In other words they would do two individual magazines. Or there could be a choice in the spring, of doing an individual magazine, a novel(?) (heaven Forbid! Bite my tongue for even suggesting it!), or contributing to a "class" anthology that would be less than a whole class!

When kids wrote in June about publishing their own magazines they wrote with such conviction — even the "less able" writers write with pride of doing something that's completely their own. Makes me think about the whole idea of kids writing with conviction, of taking responsibility, establishing →

nice word conviction

ownership, etc. Individual magazines could be a critical move. I think I'll let the [illegible] problem for a while, finish Poe and see what it feels like in early January.

~ ~

In the meantime I should return to my preparation for tomorrow night. It's hard for me to do more than sketch an outline of the main points I want to cover. I don't think I could ever write out a paper to present. I depend too much on the "feel" of the audience to plan things out in such detail. Rita & Anita have written accounts — typed since last week. I am at once skeptical and envious of their degree of preparedness.

~ ~

December 2

First assigned "topic" of the year... 3 choices based upon "the Cask of Amontillado"

~ ~

Home from Reading Council. The presentation went very well. I amaze myself sometimes. I get in tune with the audience and it seems that I draw from them the words to say. I felt "powerful" talking to that group tonight. I knew I had them with me. This always seems to happen in presentations at conferences, etc.

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Dec. 22,

(Eng. A) Just ~~[illegible]~~ "announced" next publication project — individual magazines. Over vacation I need to come up with deadlines, requirements, etc. — a detailed "assignment sheet". —

Yesterday in this class ~~#~~ — something told me that we should write for awhile. We began — someone said, how long? I said "oh, about 5 min. or so". But it went much longer — after 15 min I stopped writing and waited. It was still a few minutes before most people stopped. Margaret + Nancy and maybe a couple of others continued writing after we stopped and went on to our discussion of the PCT tasks. I don't think that ever happened before. Can't help but think it's related to the kind of writing we've done in the past week — Makes me realize that ~~[illegible]~~ despite what else we are doing and how "precious" class time may seem to be, it's always important to "schedule" time for writing what ever you want to write.

intuitively knowing it's time?

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January 4

Time for a report on the day's activitics. Traditionally this day always drags and doesn't feel "good". We are distant from one another....... two weeks apart differen routines, etc. By tomorrow I expect to "feel Normal'.

This is English ~~B~~ A. We didn't write in English B. We should have, but I had a bunch of PCT papers to hand back and I was not sure how much time the reading sample would take.

The day is beastly. The rain drives against the windows and threatens to come in. Most of us wish it were snow. If it were snow it would be months before they could dig us out.

Di - what a wonderful shift - it captured a whole other level for me.

I'm glad the PCT's are tomorrow so we can get them over with.

For some reason I seem not to be able to write.

(Later)

The distinction between process journals and any other journal is blurring for some. When we wrote in ENG. A today I noticed what seemed to be quite a few kids opting to write in their p.j.'s even though it was totally free writing. They all seemed to know somehow →

that we would write and once again the writing WAS quiet and soothing. I WAS the first to stop I think.

MATT, Seth, TARA, Chrissy and several others handed me their p.j's AS they were leaving CLASS in response to my "if you've written something you want a response to by tomorrow hand your journal to me before you leave". What they wrote WAS not at all related to any ideas for writing, or the magazine or anything "academic". It WAS all fairly personal ... not revealing but reflective perhaps of their mood and thoughts at the time.

I attribute what seems to be a "trend" to several things: 1st. a growing sense of trust and intimacy with me. 2nd. the need for two-way communication — for A response to what's on their minds — the comfort of being listened to.

I was thinking of one of the articles I read in EJ over vacation. A woman described her "successful" journal program. Every Monday her students write for the first 20 minutes of CLASS. Because they ~~usually~~ often don't know what to write about she has given them a list of topics — things like "one time I WAS embarrassed when...." or "My Favorite Place", or "A Book I READ Recently". When kids ask if they can write whatever they want she usually says yes if she knows they won't "take advantage of it."

I can't bear rdg. this again.

(the good part is yet to come). She collects the journals, grades them!!! not on grammar but on content!! Number grades no less sometimes even writes a short comment and returns them the following Monday. I was horrified that EJ had published her article. Are they that hard up? Another guy wrote about how he uses humor in his classes with a long explanation justifying sarcasm and teasing in addition to the joke breaks he puts in his lectures. I ponder the state of my profession. Actually most of what I read in 5 issues goon made me feel pretty good about what's going on across the country in English. But every time I give myself a big dose of EJ's it makes me feel that I should be writing articles about some things. Whether they are published or not I should write. I resolved to work on a couple of things. Now if I can only find the time. (Nonsense! the time is there. Just use it.)

Congratulations!

I had no intentions of launching into a whole thing about EJ and articles. Actually I wanted to say something about Seth who wrote a little note at the top of the page he wrote on today directing me to something he wrote on December 21. It was way in the back of his journal .... he must have originally intended it to be private ....

So I read it and responded. Naturally, the fact that he and others feel free to write about almost anything in their p.j.'s makes me feel good. It also makes me think about an idea for next year. I'd already thought of abandoning process journal as a name and going with writing diary or something similar. But now I think about just having one journal with a small variety of purposes. At the beginning of the year it can be mostly for "process entries", writing ideas, writing exercises, etc. with only a smattering of freewriting-type ~~[illegible]~~ stuff. As the year progresses the kids themselves will alter the nature of what they write as they wish to, but I will be able to respond, initiate, comment, etc. regularly from the beginning.

What about the need for some completely private place to write? I could suggest a diary or something like that for those who don't already have that.

2

I thought I would accomplish quite a bit tonight. Somehow I had the impression that I had a lot of time with only a few things to do. Hmph!

Tuesday, Jan. 19 Study Group

The issue of investment for in writing:

* I definitely feel that we need to help kids anchor their writing in some place. I have not done this and I think the quality of writing has suffered because of it. Kids write "stories" — they think of preposterous plots which they don't know how to do well, they write with little regard for their own experience. Kidnapping stories, murders, car chases, etc. Some kids do these better than others, but that's not saying much.

We think of some ways to help kids find out what it is they want to write about. Freewriting for example. I read a lot of Elbow this weekend and I know how he uses it and how he "teaches" others to use it. I can do what he says. It works for me. But I'm not sure that the kids will find it useful or be able to use it in this way. If I say to them, "look over what you just wrote in three? minutes, look for a word or phrase or thought that has its own energy or that draws your interest and attention ?" ______ What does that mean to them? If I sat down individually and showed them in my own what I mean_ maybe that would be better. Why not use the overhead projector as I did for modelling "automatic writing" yesterday. I guess it's worth a shot.

What other techniques are there? What tools that we know of to give to kids? thought chains, memory chains, guidelines. these things work for adults. I guess I won't know how useful they are for kids if I don't try them. I want to try them, but I think I better not expect 100% results.

Reading Moffett also over the weekend reminded me of how important it is to have kids read lots of different things. I started looking through many different books and quickly became overwhelmed at how much there is and how important it is. I don't know if diverse reading experiences are good ways for kids to discover what it is they want/need to write though — they may be fun in some way or they may stimulate ideas... The interior monologues, for example, most kids enjoyed doing and listening too.

that's not why the reading is imp't, in my opinion.

Here's the question. Any writer ought to ask

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* The Q.

himself/herself .... what do I need to write. How can we get kids to view themselves as writers in such a way that they will have this ~~[illegible]~~ sense. I personally don't feel that I've touched it at all. ~~[illegible]~~ We talk of the power of writing; do kids experience that? ~~inside~~ have I experienced it? I've felt the power of an impact on others but what about a sense, a power that comes right at the moment of ~~re~~writing, of shaping the meaning, or of writing from the core of one's being. I can think of two times when I've been physically shaken by the emotional impact of what I WAS writing. Is this a goal to strive for? Is it a rare happening? Unrealistic to expect this to happen often. But is there a medium point that can realistically be reached? and how do we "intervene" in a way to promote that?

I imagine that's not the only way to measure the existence of power in writing.

One thought underneath this - ~~[illegible]~~ what is our hidden agenda? what values ~~is there~~ ~~[illegible]~~ are implied? ~~Are we~~ ~~Are they~~ ~~[illegible]~~

STOP

Monday, June 21

By Eng. B this morning I had managed to undo my made-up sleep and positive outlook on things. Yearbook signing was very emotional for me. A kid hands me his yearbook and I think quickly of a whole bunch of memories experiences relating to him/her. It makes me sad, nostalgic, and I already miss them and there's still a week to spend together. It doesn't seem to matter who it is. With someone like Brian or Tim, or Jimmy K - Mara others it's because of very special things that have happened between us. With someone like Billy Peterson, I get sad thinking that we never really connected, that I didn't do enough. I think the one that affected me most today was Matt Hernic. I know what an absolutely incredible year this has been for him, see how far he has come. It touches me and makes me feel sad for I know next year will not be as good and I'm afraid he'll go back to being unhappy about school.

Lunchtime — I get pissed that the kids don't want to have some

From the Teaching Journal of Ross Burkhardt

BAJ _ 2 - 9/28/81

If you add to that the Bump journal entry, the three process entries, and the two social studies pieces done as homework, you get some fourteen or ~~fifteen pieces of writing done in the first thirteen days of school~~ (the Dr. Bell letter had a list, a rehearsal sheet, and perhaps two or three drafts to it alone, so it is hard to figure out exactly how many pieces they had). Suffice it to say that they did a lot of writing in the opening sequence of days, and I am pleased with the fact that they did. I think it has set an expectation in their minds that they will be doing a lot of writing, and it has given me some good baseline data to look at and to use as a base for comparisons later in the year.

My ~~plans now are to have them pick a piece and revise it and take it to publication~~ -- they can do any of the three ICWs or the three pieces, or they can create something brand new. But I want to start on a magazine and get something published quickly to complete the cycle, and then begin all over again.

In fixing up their folders, I noted the kids had horrible difficulty dealing with the organization of it all. "What order do they go in?" "I'm missing something." "Am I doing it right?" "What do I put in next?" It just seemed to me that they were far more thrown by the task of arranging the pieces of writing chronologically than I thought would be the case. In the second class (Eng.B), I think this happened less because I structured it a little more by putting a complete list on the board (I had not done that in Eng.A) and by being more specific in the instructions. But I was surprised that they seemed to have a problem organizing all the info. I guess it was a case of me knowing what to do and assuming everyone knew what to do.

Now that the folders are set up. it is my intention to read through each one and get a new sense of their writing and take notes on same in my special journal on their writing. I also want to read through their process journals and comment on those. If I can finish all of this by Thursday it will be a miracle, but I can dream. At any rate, I plan to start and get on with it. One of the things I was not good at last year was giving specfic feedback to specific kids. This is an attempt to do the kind of thing Di would do. She is very good at thst, and I think the feedback is incredibly important for the kids if they are to grow in their writing.

One last thought I had over the weekend -- Iwas thinking about Sondra at Leisure Village with the Americanism Essay Contest -- and how much fun it would be if one of Di's or my English A kids was a finalist so that she would have reason to come along and see the "publication" aspect of that event.

I read through all the BUMP journals yesterday and wrote extensive coments on their entries. About half the kids did a decent job, about ten percent did a super job, about ten percent were really poor, and the rest a little less than expected. But I am convinced that by responding seriously and at length to what they wrote and by raising questions with them for clarification in the next entry, I will spur them to better entries during the course of the year. These journals can become incredibly importnatnt, and thus the first response they get has to be a strong positive one. I was pleased with their suggestions and reactions -- ~~there is a very healthy attitude about doing a show~~.

BAJ -- October 7, 1981

So much happens in so many areas, and so much of it affects other areas, that it is hard to keep up with significant events that ought to be in this journal on my teaching of writing. How do I dissassociate one thing from another when one of my goals is to create an interlocking series of experiences that feed one upon the other? How do I not write about the Yardleys concert this Friday afternoon when I believe it will be a source/inspiration for some writing of kids? How do I neglect to mention all the stuff in socialstudies about the BUMP entries and yesterday's great leap forward when the process I used is so grounded (aha! a nice ethnographic term) in Bay Area? ~~I find this journal becoming much more of a total school experience journal and not just one of English or of writing~~. And that is how it should be, but God does it take time.

Yesterday's class with the writing group (3:30 p.m. class) pushed me ahead in my understanding of the task of these two years. Coming out of the class was a decision on my part, influenced by Sondra, to select both Shruti and Becky as subjects for observation and case studies, if they are ameanable (and I assume they will be). I had considered Craig because of his flamboyance, and Jeanine because of her positive seriousness, but I was not really firm on any one. I had doubts about the value of selecting two obviously strong writers -- how much impact can I have on them, I ask myself? Since they are already so good and so "formed" in their writing processes, what can I do to impact on them and how much is there for me to learn from that as compared with taking a student who is average or slightly above average and seeing what it is that I do that has some significant impact on them. But then, Becky and Shruti are examples of the "good" student with good skills, and each year I get kids like that who ha-ve talent. How do I nurture that? Whta impact do I have with what I do? And how widespread beyond the "receptive" writers is that impact? Knowing Marcia helps -- she would be receptive to her daughter Becky participating in this activity. And I feel the Rajans would also -- given the friendship of the girls, my work in R&T with Lakshmi, and what has transpired so far in English this year.

Becky and Shruti have some interesting similarities -- each has a talented older sister; each comes from a family that is cultured and "academic". Becky has gone to SWR all her life; Shruti is new since 6th grade (I think she used to live in North Carolina - or was that Asha?). They have been good friends since 7th grade at least. Some interesting questions to pursue -- how does one affect the other? How do I affect either of them? What motivates them? Why is Becky's "voice" when she reads her stuff so much more powerful than Shruti's? Why does Becky write expressive, artistic stuff and Shruti more of the reportorial kind of writing? Sondra said pick people with whom you don't mind spending time; both girls are talented yet unaffected by it; they are each different, yet they have a wonderful friedship and share many common traits. It ought to be an interesting study.

1-78

From the Teaching Journal of Audre Allison

Patti ~~that~~ writes upside-down: left-handed = incredible

Todd - It is best to know what pronoun to use when you are using it - not when a dummy expert question is trying to trick you. You've learned to confront the tricks with some trick-busters - so relax and continue to write clearly. Your simpler, clearer sentences keep you clear of pronoun traps.

4/19 This study is forcing me to slow down and to listen more carefully to individual students. As each student reads her/his piece, I focus with greater - more sincere ~~serious~~ interest. I think it is helping me to see (more clearly) dang. modify the things that are happening, are working instead of being distracted by what I think is not working. I'm coming out more pleased - more content at the end of the day and that in itself is a very real plus.

We have not yet moved to writing groups. We've written and shared in class and that has taken a long time. But the students have been sharing their feelings and ideas about how they write, what helps them to write, and what seems to stand in the way – or hurt. They have thus far been listening to one another, practicing "say back," practicing note taking as they listen since we are not able to Xerox for each group meeting. Perhaps I'll try to get it done in one class if Norman can give me the aid he promised. He sent Rose and then took her away.

Students are gathering ideas for an "open letter to a teacher" about what helps and what hurts the writing process.

Today, as they read process, we stopped occasionally to try to assess what we're learning from one another. Some of the comments actually thrilled me. They began to realize & verbalize the importance of the honest, real experience and of

1-80

relating — or finding connections
between a topic (unfamiliar) and
your own experience.

Ronnie said: (approx.)

I didn't like the topics. Finally
I chose "Forward Leaps in Science"
(we were using the Regents choices) and I began
unless to write everything I know about
advances in science. When I got
home I read it and it seemed to go all
over the place and it didn't say anything.
So I thought I ought to try to get it in order.
I decided to try chronological order.
I began again and all went well for
one paragraph and then I couldn't
think of anymore to say. I was
staring out my window at the
sky and watching a big black
cloud and I began to wonder.
I wonder what primitive man
must have thought when he looked
up and saw a cloud like that ~~or~~
~~it~~ and suddenly I had an
idea (aha) and I began to
write again."

I'm anxious to hear what
comes next. But from that people

- the students - began to express the importance of connecting to something you can feel - or something you've experienced, remember, know. I thought it was an exciting moment and I'm glad I was focused enough to let it seep in. So — the class moves more slowly - but it's better this way and I'm not subconsciously counting the number of assignments completed. They are writing and listening and the listening is crucial. It's crucial for me — the benefits come flying.

Tim and John both start off — "I have no process; I just write." Then they begin to describe a pretty intricate process.

I responded - after sayback with suggestions for further self-probing of process.

Most agree one must have quiet - no distractions. Some say music - some kinds - does not distract; some get ideas from lyrics. All agree that T.V. is totally distracting

It seems great having these "kids" say these things to one another. Many of them say, "finally I went to my room and shut the door." The luxury of "a room of one's own."

Monday we'll begin groups. Let 'em try groups of their own choosing. Choose a pal—connect with 2 others. Then I'll arrange what is left.

9/21 Writing groups — Go carefully over responding techniques. It does not work in 2 groups. Slow kids — we plug away - modelling but it keeps me from seeing. six other groups and the modelling is of little help. They seem embarrassed — insult one another in a joking manner. They cajole, coax and compliment in a silly way — but perhaps overly. They have little to share and are ashamed. Perhaps they'll begin to come to writing groups with more. Sometimes I doubt it. They'd do better with literature — would they?

It's a hard day. I feel as if I've been carrying lead.

Some groups seem to take charge, but I don't even find the time to get to them today.

Walter asks — "Won't this make us dependent on a group? When we go to college we'll be on our own." This opens up a good discussion and I think he is finally convinced of the value of the group — "Oh ye of little faith."

Some kids want to use the period to re-write. I say okay this time but want them to feel responsible enough to come to the group with a piece to share.

They'll revise for tomorrow. I want to get started thinking essay topics.

I'm feeling a need to begin literature in class even though they're reading outside of class.

no skills at all on a piece of writing. John David and Lori seem like they will be fine - their skills are adequate. The hardest thing will be getting them to show up. If they do that they may make it at last.

3/10/82

I feel in a real jam right about now and decided to write in here as a way to use my time productively instead of just sitting and worrying about my fate. My entire course is depending on SCWR tomorrow and I thought I had the visit well planned and all thought out but it seems to be falling apart. I guess my heart really wasn't in it so I was just preoccupied with the scholarship game and all. One of the two board members I got to speak to the group won't be able to come and I am trying to cover up for that now. I asked one other board member, admittedly last minute and he was unable to make it as well. I am down to my final Stone now and I can't reach her. If she says no, which I fully expect, then I will have to alter the day's schedule and just vote with the juniors. I can't really make any excuses for this but just salvage what I can.

I write this here because the same thing seems to be happening with my class and I am scrambling there also. I planned to view Hamlet last week and arranged it well ahead but the senior trip cancelled those plans. Next the I planned to show it this week and when I went to sign up for the UTR it was all booked up and it had to be put on the calendar for the following week. Now I have 4 days of class at least two of which I am not sure what to do with. I am going to give the students a choice either to read the play before we view it or get the creative pieces finished this week and do the play next week in an integrated fashion. Either one seems fine but I really feel the pressure of scrambling. Somehow that feeling goes along with my teaching and I can never get used to it and I am always trying to work my way out of it. I wonder if it is ~~my~~ in the nature of the job or just the fact that I can't juggle very well. I know lots of people feel over extended and torn in all directions but I hate feeling that way and yet here I am stuck in the same spot. I wonder

what it will be like next year
when I go back to four classes (4 what
a laugh in most places its 5 and
in some 6). It all seems to get
done but maybe I don't spend enough
time thinking about quality.
I hope this is okay to put in here -
I mean not too much off the
topic and all. It helped ever so
slightly to write about it.

3/17/81

Happy St. Patricks day.

I started Hamlet last
Friday - we read through the
first soliloquy and analyzed
it line by line. The students
were ~~excellent~~ interested
and skillful at the task.
They really had some
good insights and understood
the ~~f~~ passage very well.
When we watched the
tape on Tuesday for the
first time having gone over

that passage really helped
with understanding the
first part. The audio on
the tape is terrible and
I have to ask Carol Burr
to see what we can do
about it. I had about
20 minutes to spare to show
the tape over 3 days and
I already used more than
1/2 of that up. That was
a slip - really a BIG -
I used up the entire
20 minutes and I'm done so
I will have to use the
entire week just to show
the tape and I really didn't
want to do that. My plan
is to have the students
write two pieces based on the
play. The first is to be
an assignment we all
do together based on the
play and generated thoo

the class discussions - the second will be something they make up based on the play. Hopefully the process will be helpful to everyone in terms of coming to an agreement on what the writing topic is to be and getting them to answer it well. One thing that is planned that is different is to have the writing groups generate the topic and then get everyone to pick the one common topic that we will all answer from the 5 or 6 presented by the groups. It will be interesting to see how we reach consensus and what the topic generated from that process is. If I were to assign a topic it would be on Hamlet's hesitation in Killing his uncle when the moment presents itself.

I don't know yet if the class is really up to their task. The play is fairly dif't and their interest level has not really peaked yet. I hope to be able to make this a successful unit but as of yet am not clear as to how it is going. One thing for sure is to talk to Carol about getting a new monitor.

My second class is really working much better than I ever expected. The 4 of them are coming everyd[ay] they are writing everyday and they seem to be enjoying what they are doing. Andy & John are working on their book about rebuilding engines and they are doing an excellent job. Andy really can't write at all in terms of his skills but on this subject he is organized and the material is well thought out. He must really know how to rebuild engines. I have no idea how to proceed with him. Once he is past the first drafting stage. Revision for meaning is fine but editing will be impossible. I could really use some guidance on this.

4/30/82

Nancy, you have been asking and asking for this long neglected journal and I am finally going to write in it so maybe as to make your reading worthwhile. Let me go over everything fairly carefully since the last entry of 3/17/81

Hamlet. The viewing of the play was okay. We didn't get over the ~~[illegible]~~ video. Difficulties with the

(44) publication this time last yr. 18/19 Kids

(45 published books to this date! 15 Kids

29

Nov. 6

Kids wanted to write when they first got to school. So why not - I threw out my plans and went with their idea. We wrote for approx 40 min. Most kids remaining in their seats, no one asked (or fought) to go to the library. Not anyone was goofing off - each child "doing his own thing." It was so different than the usual shuffling, noisy classroom. ☺

Back to idea that I had at the beginning of the school year.

Since I'm revising my procedures anyway - I'm going to move writing to the first thing each day. After snack now we will do Recipe for Reading (sound/symbol) Magic Circle, etc.

Can you write this out "for the record"?

Nov. ~~10~~ 9

Leland Jacobs worked with poetry. Exposing them to "Big as" "Little as". We're going to try it tomorrow.

- Two first grade classrooms together was a terrible idea. (I hope Mary D. learned something!)

Writing time is now longer stop at 9:40.

① Writing in the morning first thing - Must be back to class from the library by 9:05 - then stay here to write (diff. than last yr.)
Children come in and get started - after each completed story they use the Check List, then put story in ~~[illegible]~~ this bucket, ~~[illegible]~~ write again until I write their name on the board for a Conference.

② Using Conferencing bucket + Check List
One child said he didn't like using this - it takes too long! He meant that he had to wait his turn - impulsive group.

3. Many children still rushing - not taking alot of pride. -- Maturity?
Derek, Dean, Lauren, Jaime - others are not rushers. However many like Denise, Kelli rush to publish whether they like their stories or not. Robby is really involved in a story - I hope he can finish it. Amy is still a

Whoa ✓

floater - Her [illegible]
stories are shorter now - long long like
last year - She's now writing, not dictating.

4. **Children can't understand what "writing" really is - putting their ideas on paper**

handwriting

fascinating - how do you know this?

terminology?

Jeremy knows he can write anything, but even he can't verbalize his thoughts - much less other children.

which thoughts?

great end of the day

5. Amy asked if I ever write books.

Robby wants to Conference with me. ✓
I want to try it after Christmas -
Just not Conference on that day.

This might really be good for this group to really model - probably many times - more than one could conference - like writing survey?
I'll try this in Jan. Too many interruptions in Dec.

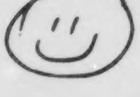
3 kids at a table = good way to keep track.

6. Thinking skills not as far along as last year's group "Do I have another class when they leave?" What do I do after School? They are trying to put it all together - think it through

again - fascinating?? what's the difference?

ran & made our own tracks. Great experiences for story starters.

Jan. 15th - Snow day - No School



Jan. 18th

Some children wrote. However Craig had a hard time - he was into making paper dinosaurs - ~~all~~ not all his books are about dinosaurs. I conferenced with Amy & Robby. They wrote a book together — they actually drew the pictures & dictated the story to me.

ah, mixed discourse!

This years class is not as advanced as last yr's. About 4-5 (Craig, Robby, Amy, Tucker) kids are still at the dictation stage.

4-5 out of 14 is more than usual. Maybe last yrs class was just

We should get 1 or 2 of these kids on video- before they become "writers"

about average. These kids are developmentally not ready to write - its not easy for them - still a struggle to put down their thoughts.

Amy & Robby worked together drawing this 13 page story - I took their dictation - at least this way they are still creating & watching the corresponding symbols that go with their words.

I'll watch to see if they are able to read the typed version of their story.

Tucker finished another story & published a book today - he seems to run in spells into writing, then days go by & then back to it.

Jeremy walked around & did nothing again. I typed his last book with no pictures - He did ask me to add another

Fire story?

note - "This is NOT a true story".

He hasn't written since then. Tomorrow the kids will probably be into writing more than today. Mondays are NOT their best days!!

Jan. 19- Class Notes - Tuesday

Doing it, but what does it mean? Quality, ownership -? Are their connections?

This year's class is (in a general way) different than last year's class. Developmental they are behind in learning - ie not as many high reading kids, thinking skills not as far along, immature in behavior.

Yes they are writing. However some (atleast 4) are usually not involved in their writing — they just sort of do it. The

other kids seem genuinely interested in their writing, but also in their other subjects.

I'm concerned about these 4-5 - right now I'm really trying to motivate them, even publishing stories even tho they haven't finished 4. can they just draw for a while?

These 4 students are not up to a reading level where stories are fun to read. They are still struggling with sound/symbol, with no thought to comprehension. I understand their uneasiness about putting words on a page - yet I'd like to assure them that they can put down invented spelling - with no right or wrong.

For the most part these 4 kids do very little work independently - so whether its writing, math or whatever, they aren't developmentally ready fo drafts. Since we have company coming Tuesday we hope to learn alot from his class, talk, & do some writing ourselves - Later if they want.

Sunday - April 18th

Well - I feel rested & not with the swing of things just yet. Fla. was warm & wonderful. Here today was sunny but cool! I'm reading the notes from the study group & have started reading Sondra's 3rd memo for Diane's class. It's interesting reading - so different however from 1st grade. It seems that Sondra is an active participant in Diane's class - like a co-teacher - team teaching, or adviser. They (Diane & Sondra) compliment (work together)

each others ideas & teaching styles. Diane often refers to Sondra in class - "We discussed this" - like both are teaching - this is good! It's using both to see a situation, both responding, both sharing the feelings of steps, pitfalls, etc.

Yes - I see that Diane has stated that they "partnered" they were important!

The best statement for me:

"The limits we place on kids and writing are our own." ✓

Wow! That's me! I keep reminding my self that there are no limits - this was easier last yr - but not this yr. I keep falling into a rut mine this yr. - I'm not sure

[richy - I can feel it and periodically tell myself to snap out of it. When that happens - things are better - for me & the kids.

The last part - interior dialogue was super - it's fun to read & it got my ideas flowing.

I bet my kids could give this a try. I think I'll introduce it later on.

Overall impression - Super! I liked it - its good to see where other people are & how they handle things. I see how seriously Diane & most of the others are taking all this. I guess because they only teach Soc. S. & English = it's more of their total day. for me its only 40 min on an ave. of 3 days a wk. I'm just not as out going as Diane.

In otherwords, its imp. to me (writing) much more tha ever before, but I've had put it into its proper pla It definitely interrides wi all lang. arts & their tota outlook on school, however, so does cursive writing, gram
sight words, workboo
reading series, note sk
math, social studi
science, following dir
directionality, listening sk
and most of all -
"learning how to lea

I have to admit I really do plan my writing activi after all other activitie have been planned.

1-100

Monday

I tried something different for our first day back after vacation. We discussed the physical conditions of the vacation snow, sun, cool, etc weather. Easter day, visiting relatives, playing outdoors, vacations, etc.

I then told (something new) the kids that we will write for 10 min. first they were to start with their vacation, if they finished that before the 10 min. was over. they could then write about anything but they were to write for 10 min. We wouldn't talk, walk around — just write.

I was pleased with what happened. They did write, they didn't talk. When the 10 min. was up we shared our writing. Noone had to share - only if you wanted to. Many of the children chose to share what they write. (Jeremy didn't share) I shared, then Jamie shared - I liked this. After a bit Tucker chose to share - at first he said No! I'm glad Jamie shared - I don't think the kids "knew" him very well - It was good to have him taking part.

I feel like the 40 min. were well spent today. They realized (I think) that they all could write for 10 min. & they had something to "tell their paper."

Tuesday

I had planned to have the kids "share" their ideas. writing, something first today. However the kids came in today & sat down & started to write. I just couldn't stop them so I told them we would have sharing circle at 9:30 - which we did. Noone had to share

Sept. 9 1981

School started. The bulletin boards were up, there were enough chairs and desks and the fourth graders seemed just about as big as sixth graders.

Yesterday I talked with Jamie Carter about scheduling and today he came in to observe our first writing lesson. I distinguish this from Bay Area Writing which I plan to begin on Tuesday after the kids feel more secure with each other and with me. We did an exercise in which the children wrote things about themselves which no one else would know about. They didn't put their names on the papers and when they finished I read them aloud and everyone tried to guess who it was. We didn't finish reading them all & will read the rest tomorrow. It was fun.

a good way o start

Oct 31, 1981

This has been an especially hectic week. We did get our "Publishing Book" started. Tom made the covers and I bought rings to put through. We have 4 published pieces so far. I am pointing it out as the place where final pieces go but I won't make too big a deal of it since we are not after product but process.

Great interest has sprung up in reading the stories of previous years. I suspect they may be enjoying them so much because they know many of the authors and they ~~are~~ perhaps making some comparisons (maybe sub conscious) (I have "Publishing Books" from 1979-80 and 1980-81)

Phil Mc Ginnis of Assured Readiness fame came in to observe for 20 min on Wed. He looked through the Publishing Books and listened to some of the conferences going on behind him on the stairs. I'm not sure he knew what was going on but he was congenial.

the year. I need to find one & run off copies first.

Feb. 25—

Jamie spent the day with us and it was a good day. The children were delighted that he was there. His problem is that everytime he tries to work with individual kids or become involved, they flock to him in droves. He has a way of making each child feel special and he has a magnetic pull on all of them. I only had to call them off a few times today so I didn't feel like too much of an ogre. I think my "after Christmas push" on behavior and getting work done & putting in effort is paying off. I don't feel I have to be after them so much these days. They are finally working in groups & pairs quite well. (I realize it is a big mistake to write, speak, or even think these things because tomorrow it may all turn chaotic.)

The word problems are turning

out quite well. After attending a math workshop, I started doing the sensible, logical thing - Having them write their own word problems. They naturally fell into the pattern of writing first drafts, reading them to a partner to see if they made sense, and editing their final copies. These we will send out to different classes to do. (They are problems written on little blue cards with the answers on the back.)

We are writing letters to Mrs. Graves at the Whaling museum and The Colonial Group of Diane Burkhardt. These are at various stages of completion and will soon (I hope) be sent off.

I have put another stipulation on sharing time. If they don't work hard during writing time, they aren't allowed to share. Today I asked two of the people, Sharon & Kevin if they felt they deserved to share. Both said "No." These * 4th graders are extremely honest in evaluating themselves. I think perhaps more so than 5th graders.

Mickail came up and asked if a person could get his pants torn in his story. I asked him if he considered this "bathroom humor". He said "No." I asked him if the torn pants were important in the story. He said "Yes". The pants get torn!

wonderful

Matthew is between stories and can't think of what to write about. He decided to publish a report on snakes. Jeff has written & had typed half of a very long story. He is dragging his heels, rewriting for the typist. Yes, rewriting is boring compared to creating a first draft. I agreed with him. This is common for Jeff, not following through. Amy K. has the same problem.

April 27, 1982

155A

After vacation, I wondered how the children would feel about getting back to writing again. Since I wasn't sure, I decided to increase sharing & encourage it. On Monday tho, we only heard journals written by children who had gone to Florida or on an extended vacation. Sharon, Janine & Maureen read. Others wanted to share and since there was a little extra time Tom & John shared also. (See case study for more about this controversy

On Tuesday & Wed. there was great enthusiasm for writing and sharing. Since they knew anyone who wanted to could share, they wrote with gusto. The push is on to publish & Eric, Tom, Christine & Kenny S. all published this week.

Eric did his own proof reading

altho he shares credit with Richard for his piece. It is a clever take off on Star Wars with funny names. I was impressed and pleased with the spelling, grammar & punctuation. I only had to correct 3 or 4 punctuation errors. He didn't have to do a third copy and he was very pleased.

Tom started a trend (perhaps) on Pac Man with many sound effects. I shall record him reading his pieces on tape on Monday.

Jamie has been reading "Miracles" - a book a poetry by children. This not only has helped calm them down after lunch, but it has increased the number of poems children have written: Christine, Kenny S., have written poems and the idea of poetry not having to rhyme is sinking in altho John insists it's not as good if it doesn't ryme.

The enthusiasm for writing is still difinately there - I told Jamie I think it is directly proportional to the time spent sharing. Writing without sharing, just isn't fun.

I had an interesting experience at book talk on Thurs. My book was a "Choose your own adventure" series where children make decisions about a story and read different endings. The story changes for each individual according to the choice she makes. Since it's diffic to discuss such a book, I decided to have them write. This gave me a chance to observe other children writing since I had 4th & 5th graders from other classes.

June 14

The children have finished their biographies—even Jeff, and they are up on the wall on display. I notice not much attention is paid to them once they got up. Perhaps because most children shared with at least one writing partner. I made children go through all the steps with these biographies and sent several children back when they just handed me their "sloppy copy." Writing becomes so much easier when the children do most of the revising and editing themselves. I think this is a good selling point in getting other teachers to try Bay Area Writing—Especially teachers in the upper grades. Older children can correct so many of their own editing errors! And so many of each other's editing & spelling errors!

From the Teaching Journal of Bill Silver

9/20

One thing that I'm going to find exceptionally hard to do is keep a journal. I've never been very good at this day-to-day stuff — somehow, I've got to find a time that is consistent — habit! If I had a clearer afterschool schedule, it would be easier, but since I don't, I'll have to find another... recapping the first 8 days of school will be tough, but first some general impressions:

1. So far I'm very pleased. Most of the kids are writing easily, we've done 3 types of freewriting, discussed process, had 1 process entry, done timelines and are starting mapping. Lots of work, generally productive. Patience!

2. Many differences between Harvey's & my class. For purposes of the journal, I'll stick to my class — I have greater control there, for one, and also Jaime is only

going to observe my kids. This will keep things a little simpler and clearer. (I hope)

3. Having Jaime in the room has been wonderful. His support & feedback have really helped. I seem to be preparing more than usual, too. His presence? My needs? Finally, when I ad lib a set of instructions, having him there to record is invaluable — I'd never be able to duplicate a lesson otherwise (only the good ones, of course)

Thanks —
helpful
looking at [illegible]

4. Great day to day variations in the quality & quantity that each child produces. Me, too. This raises a dilemma — how to maintain an expectation of quality & performance, and also leave things relaxed and open enough to encourage the kind of ~~t~~ good, personal writing that I know will result. Fear of some kids taking advantage, and not producing *anything*.

Time for a summary of plans & results:

10/16

Another one of those days. It was wonderful not having Harvey's class today — I'm developing a very negative attitude about some of ~~th~~ his kids & writing. As a group, they're not very lively in discussion or sharing. As individuals, they vary tremendously [from Lara (copious & philosophical) to Jonathan (nada!)], but the ones who do little or nothing seem to outweigh the ones who write & enjoy doing so. The contrast with my class is amazing — not that I have them all writing fluently & confidently — but they are enthusiastic & willing to do/try anything in any curriculum area. And they're fun!

Tried guidelines for freewriting today — I don't think it worked too well. I wasn't as well prepared for this as I was earlier in the year — my questions & suggestions ~~wasn't~~ weren't as well organized.

Try [illegible] — one writing [illegible] when you characterize each of your kids as a writer — what comes to mind, what distinguishes one from another? a stream of conscious cataloging highly recommended by all who've tried!

55

10/28

Almost time for a new one of these ...

Virtually the whole class finished first drafts of Halloween story by Tuesday. One exception ~~exception~~ is [illegible], who's writing an opus.

A couple of things of note. First, there seems to be a lot of enthusiasm about the writing. Talking with each other, sharing, questions — overall involvement is high. This has also flowed over into lots of other Halloween things - I've never (at least in recent memory) had as many decorations as this year, and the boys who are making those haunted castles out of oaktag (Deane, Jon, Chris C, Matt H) are really doing lots of elaborate + precise work. Also talking about it! To each other, to me, to others in the class - descriptions, demonstrations. Graves, too → Moffett or somebody talks about the need to draw first, then write ... Unfortunately,

1-113

Biographies.

Task: 1. to design an interview to get biographical information from a classmate chosen randomly.

2. to write that data up as a biography.

This is part of a much longer
1 unit of work. The first step is these
bios (practice with writing interview questions,
interviewing, transcribing and summarizing), and
2 will then go to a second set of interviews
with teachers on their attitudes toward
3 school. Third part will be an interview
of a family member (preferably a grandparent
or older aunt or uncle) about their lives
4 growing up. Finally, a more formal
research report on the place that relative
grew up – state, city, country, etc.

The biographies came out really well. They took also a bit longer than I anticipated, but allowed me to do several things.

112

I introduced writing groups; random groups of 4, with a specific set of questions to respond to for each writer. I suggested that they read aloud first, then fill in the second sheet, and then share their responses. After running through the first meeting, they suggested that pieces be read twice — that it was easy to talk about a piece in general from one hearing, but to answer questions like "find the best specifics in the piece" required listening carefully a second time. Almost all felt it was valuable sharing like that; the atmosphere was very positive and cooperative.

2nd grouping

They met in writing groups a second time (after revising) to check the accuracy of the facts in the bio and to see if other revisions were necessary. These groups of 4 where of 2 pairs of partners; the partners listened for accuracy (it was about him/her), and the other pair listened for

2 pairs of partners

sequence, introductions and conclusions.

Again a successful experience, I think. Errors of fact were explained + corrected; introductions and conclusions got some needed attention. Finally, they edited, copies were xeroxed for each member of the class (they got a booklet, complete with xerox room errors in page sequence), and the originals were mounted on next to silhouettes ✓ (did I spell it right?) and displayed in the room.

yeah yeah

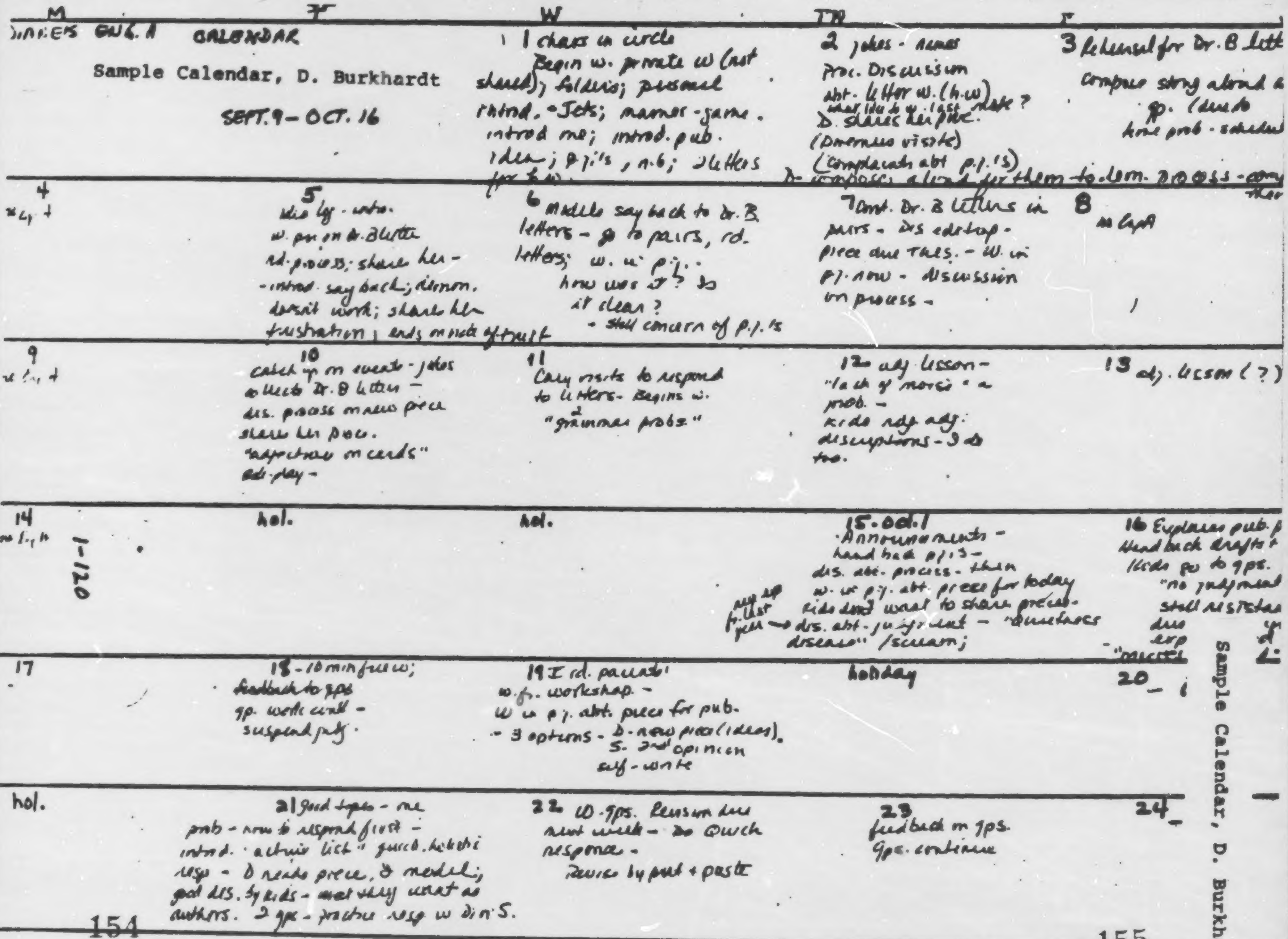
The whole project worked well! Their was enthusiasm, the process was good, the products were well done, and they gobbled up the booklets and actually read them. (Kevin made a comment about all the errors in them — that figures!) I was pleased! ☺

Rather odd + interesting day. All kids except Jan, Matt B. + Scott have handed in their anthology stories, and we decided on a cover today, so all that's left is the typing. I am impressed with the last two pieces my kids have wrote — the biographies + the anthology piece. With a few exceptions, they have put in lots of work and effort revising, re-editing and thinking about both things, and I feel it's time for a break. Some short, silly, frivolous (to them) writing activities are in order for this week and after vacation (to warm up again). So I spent last night rereading sections of Moffett for activities. There were a couple of types that attracted me - sensory writing, dialogues, group writing, note taking - and all would have, I think, further effects on their future writing. I didn't make

Affectively

any decision last night, but this morning decided that the sensory stuff would be good - it concentrates on detail + note taking. And I have a whole bunch of material for exploring the areas (I've done whole units on them before) and a wonderful culminating activity with lemons (getting to know your lemon). When I got to school I pulled out a bunch of touching materials (marble, cork, towel, etc), a sound effects record, and a poster of super-closeup photos. I talked a bit about senses, told them a description of a gerbil (+ had them guess what it was from the description - "It's small, warm body curled up in my hand, it's tail wrapped around my thumb ..." etc.) Then played the record and had them list all the sounds they heard (it was amazing how much more specific some kids were than others! eg. a storm vs. rain, thunder + wind

Sample Calendars



WRITERS ENG. A CALENDAR

Sample Calendar, D. Burkhardt

SEPT. 9 – OCT. 16

M	T	W	TH	F
		1 chairs in circle Begin w. private w (not shared); folders; personal introd. – Jots; name-game. introd me; introd. pub. idea; p.j.'s, n.b.; 2 letters for h.w.	2 jokes – names Proc. Discussion abt. letter w. (h.w) what like to w. last nite? D. shares her piece. (Drawings visits) (Complaints abt p.j.'s) D. composes aloud for them to dem. process – com	3 Rehearsal for Dr. B lett Compose story aloud a gp. (due to time prob. - schedul ther
4 no l.g. +	5 Idea log – intro. w. pr. on Dr. B letter rd. process; share her – – introd. say back; demon. doesn't work; share her frustration; ends on note of trust	6 Models say back to Dr. B. letters – go to pairs, rd. letters; w. in p.j. – how was it? Is it clear? – Still concern of p.j.'s	7 Cont. Dr. B letters in pairs – dis editing – piece due Tues. – W. in p.j. now – discussion on process –	8 no Lg.A
9 no l.g. +	10 catch up on events – jokes collects Dr. B letters – dis. process on new piece share her proc. "adjectives on cards" role-play –	11 Cary visits to respond to letters – Begins w. 2 "grammar probs."	12 adj. lesson – "lack of voice" a prob. – kids rdg. adj. descriptions – I do too.	13 adj. lesson (?)
14 no l.g. h 1-120	hol.	hol.	15 Oct. 1 · Announcements – hand back p.j.'s – dis. abt. process – then w. in p.j. abt. piece for today kids decide what to share piece. – may be fr. list yell → dis. abt. judgment – "disease" / scream;	16 Explains pub. p Hand back drafts + kids go to gps. "no judgment still resistance due exp – "mistakes"
17	18 – 10 min free w; feedback to gps gp. work contd – suspend judg.	19 I rd. parallel w.j. workshop. – W in p.j. abt. piece for pub. – 3 options – D. new piece (ideas). S. 2nd opinion self-write	holiday	20
hol.	21 good tapes – one prob – how to respond first – introd. "action list" guid. holistic resp. – D reads piece, & model; good dis. by kids – what they want as authors. 2 gps – practice resp. w din's.	22 W. gps. Revision due next week – Do Quick response – Revise by cut + paste	23 feedback on gps. Gps. continue	24

Sample Calendar, D. Burkhard.

Sample Calendar, R. Burkhardt

	M	T	W	Th	F
1	93 ook talks & CLM test	94 kids in grps – selecting skits; group them wtg. list to music; R "so much to do"	95 kids in grps – (B h. w. Lenny S)	96 more gp. work – Lord of the Flies	97
15	Winter Vacation				
1 22 1-21	98	99 R-angry when Barb H. sits outside of circle – learning reasons for things ... Thank you letter to someone doing wtg. – assoc. to thanks. Reminds R. of poem – no regrets. – introd. idea of "perf." wtg. – so many parents to share poem – R angry "I don't hear you"	1 person msg. 100 R – "Shoe comic strip – one on wtg. – beads of sweat – R. shares/ R rds. "Compelled Poem – done w/ SG – I'm feeling pressure abt. the show – R has some typed copies of wtg. for show – kids in grps – not much gets done –	101 who's not here? R Rds. his letter to B Kaplan / des. process. some kids say this was rough – not as boring. "how bring movement to wtg.?" long. dis. of trust – R thanks them.	102
3 1	103 R on Wash. DC. trip R. has lonely time on trip.	104 Wash. DC. trip (we talk → J. entry more personal)	105 announcements – Thorp here & there. Some time to write – reads Saunders on – props books on floor – (R. being conciliatory w. kids today)	106 I'm at MLA (Chris Mazdect) →	107 MLA
3 9	108 (workshop) talk w. R at night w. R – tired, depressed, "no special skills"	109 inc. frustrating – Coord. things. brick by brick – rehearse skits – – repeat; hard work	110 (Montauk)	111 t-shirts/ "I can't do everything at once" / Yells at Barb H / Yells at gp – "Act your age" " Tired of dealing w. babies " – memor. s[illegible]t for show/ practice?	112

	M	T	W	Th	F
1|8	93 (Disc. of "A Rose for Emily" — c̄ HW: list events in chronological order)	94 Review of sts' outlines of events in "A Rose for Emily"	95 Sts. read to whole class f. work-in-progress ("voice" piece); AA structures response. AA asks for written explanation f. those who won't read.	96 Sts. fill in "speculative draft" sheets: how they want readers to respond; how they, as readers, do respond to pieces.	97
1|15	Winter Vacation				
1|22	98 1-122	99 Sts. disc. & fill in response sheets for bks. read in groups (*Summer*, *The Bell Jar*, *Ordinary People*, & others)	100 (Ⓡ visit other 11th grade classes.) AA & sts. try out ideas for collaborative "sagas." Sts. choose story "frames" to work on.	101 Sts. write; begin to develop characters for episodes in "saga."	102 (film of story "Bernice Bobs her Hair," & disc.)
3|1	103	104 Sts. meet in groups to read episodes to one another; begin to combine episodes to make group stories.	105 Group work on stories continues. Ⓡ sit c̄ Karen, Debbie, & Kalim.	106 Group work on stories continues.	107
3|9	108	109 AA & sts. read & disc. Diana Chang's wrg. process (f. article); sts. fill out process sheet on wrg. "sagas"	110 (Sts. disc. process of wrg. "sagas")	111 Sts. read completed "sagas" to class. (AA reads some of these for them.)	112

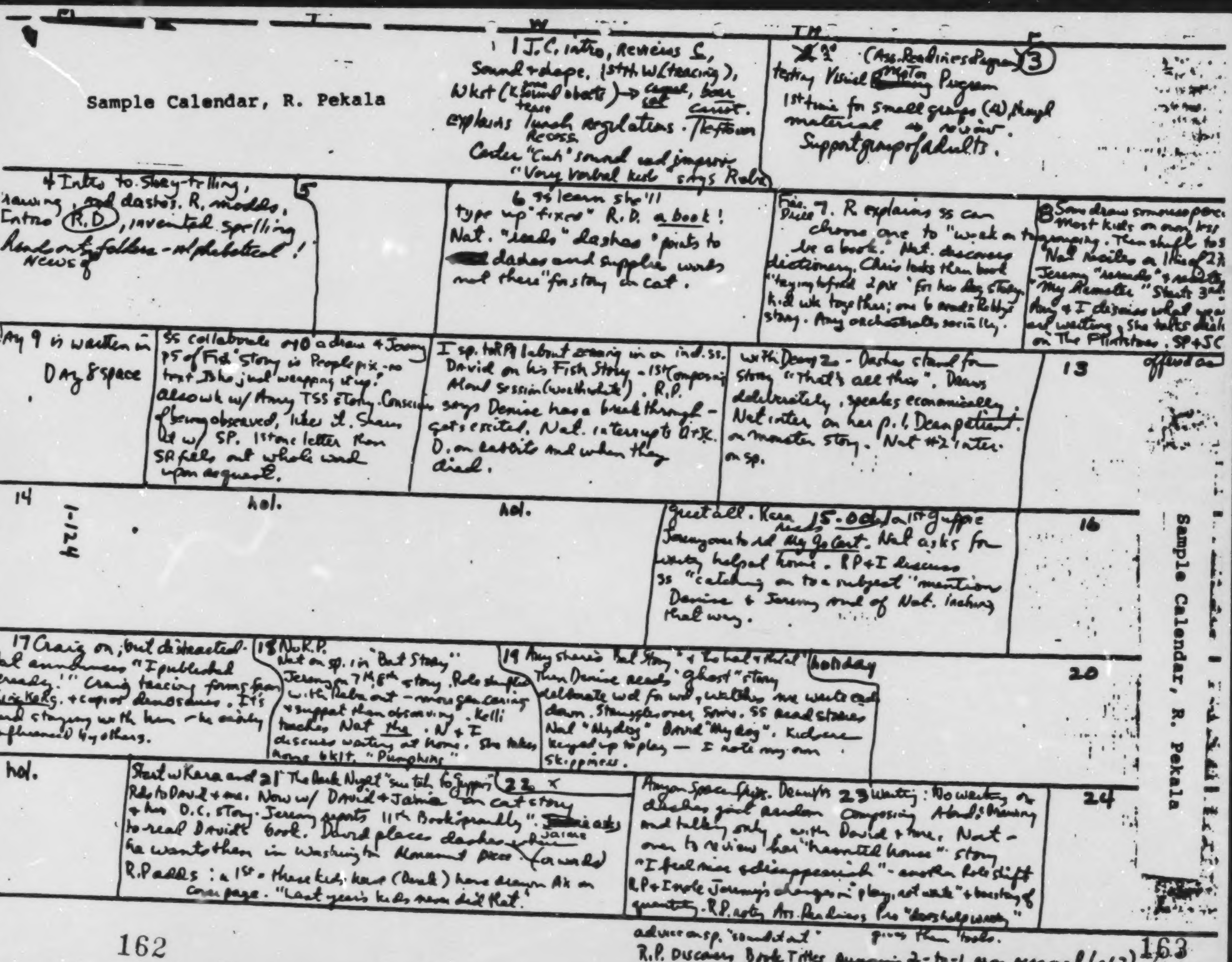
AA

Sample Calendar, L. Schutzman

	M	T	W	Th	F
Jn 4	69	70 Lit. Unit – Fairy Tales. Class discusses "Beauty & the Beast"	71 "Beauty & the Beast" cont'd – Class disc.	72 "Snow White" – class disc.	73
1/11	74	75 (LS absent)	76 "Cinderella" – class disc.	77 Other versions of "Cinderella" – class disc.	~~78~~ Sch. closed snow day
1/18	78 1-123	~~80~~ 79 Essay on "Cinderella" Andrea Dworkin on fairy tales – class disc.	80 Dworkin essay cont'd. – class disc.	81 B. Bettelheim essay on fairy tales class. disc.	82 (Exam on fairy tales)
1/25	83	84 LS explains & starts Sts. working on new assignment: wrtg. or wrtg. abt. fairy tales	85 Sts. work on diff. stages of new proj.: wrtg., rdg., talking	86 (Class visits wood carver to talk abt. process)	87
2/1	88	~~88~~ 89 Work period – see pg 85 Sts. read, write, take notes, talk	90 Work on fairy tale project continues: rdg., wrtg., taking notes	L.S. & 91 Sts. write for part of pd., then disc. plans & process	92

LS

Sample Calendar, R. Pekala



T W TH

1 J.C. intro, Reviews S, sound + shape. 1st H.W. (tracing), Wkst (some K sound objects) → camel, ~~cat~~ bear, tease, carrot. explains lunch regulations. Recess. Tk form. Circles "Cat" sound and jingle. "Very verbal kids" says Rob.

~~2~~ 3rd (Ass. Readiness Program) 3
testing Visual Motor Program
1st time for small groups (4), though material → review.
Support group of adults.

4 Intro to story-telling, drawing, and dashes. R. models. Intro R.D., invented spelling. Read only follow — alphabetical! News

5

6 ss learn she'll type up "fixed" R.D. a book! Nat. "reads" dashes, points to [redacted] dashes and supplies words not there for story on cat.

Fire Drill 7. R explains ss can choose one to "work on to become a book." Nat. discovers dictionary. Chris looks thru book "trying to find 2 pix" for her dog story. Kids work together; one 6 reads Kelly's story. Amy orchestrates socially.

8 Sam draws someone's piece. Most kids on own 1st drawing. Then shift to s. Nat recites a list of 2 [illegible]. Jeremy "reads" + [illegible] "My [illegible]" Starts 3rd. Amy & I discuss what you are writing. She talks [illegible] on The Flintstones. SP + SC offered an

Day 9 is written in Day 8 space

SS collaborate w/ D a draw 4 Jeremy p5 of Fish Story is People pix — no text. "She just wrapping it up." Also wk w/ Amy TSS story. Conscious of being observed, likes L. Shows it w/ SP. 1st one letter then SP fills out whole word upon request.

I sp. to RP about erasing in an ind. ss. David on his Fish Story — 1st Composing Aloud session (worthwhile). R.P. says Denise has a breakthrough — gets excited. Nat. interrupts D. + K. D. on rabbits and when they died.

with Denny 2 — Dashes stand for story "That's all there". Draws deliberately, speaks economically. Nat inter. on her p. 1, Dean patient. on monster story. Nat #2 inter. on sp.

13

14 1-124 hol. hol.

Greet all. Kara reads 15. Octo[illegible] on 1st guppie. Jeremy comes to rd My Go Cart. Nat asks for writing help at home. RP + I discuss ss "catching on to a subject" mention Denise & Jeremy and of Nat. inching that way.

16

17 Craig on, but distracted. Val announces "I published already!" Craig tracing forms from Krickets + copies dinosaurs. It's [illegible] staying with him — he easily influenced by others.

18 No R.P. Nat on sp. 1 in "Bat Story". Jeremy on 7th, 8th story. Role shift with Rob out — more gen. caring + support than observing. Kelli teaches Nat the. N + I discuss writing at home. She takes home bkit. "Pumpkins"

19 Amy shares "Bat Story" + "to hat + [illegible]". Then Denise reads "ghost" story. deliberate wd for wd, watches me write each down. Struggles over Spiro. SS read stories Nat "My dog" David "My dog". Kids are keyed up to play — I note my own skippiness.

holiday

20

hol.

Start w Kara and 21 "The Dark Night" [illegible] Rob to David + me. Now w/ David + Jaime on cat story + his D.C. story. Jeremy reports 11th Book "proudly". ~~Jaime~~ Jaime asks to read David's book. David places dashes where he wants them in Washington Monument piece (for words). R.P. adds: a 1st — these kids have (Derek) have drawn Ax on cover page. "Last year's kids never did that."

22 x

Amy on Spaceship. Denny's 23 Writing: No writing or dashes just random Composing Aloud; drawing and talking only with David + me. Nat — over to review her "haunted house" story "I feel more [illegible]" — another role shift. RP + I note Jeremy's changes in "play, not write" + boasting of quantity. R.P. notes Ass. Readiness Pro "doesn't help writing" advice on sp. "sound it out" gives them tools.
R.P. Discusses Book Titles running 2-to-1 non personal (of 7)

24

Sample Calendar, R. Pekala

Anita [redacted]

Sample Calendar, A. Graves

M	T	W	Th	F
51 AG shares her drafts, etc. of ecs on teaching writing (Reading Council) uses imperfections + steps on company. Asks its a missing step... I wk w/ Richie + Mike on China copying phenom. (Continues)	52 Dec. 1 I observe Richie + Mike rewrite "Chinese Early Civil." Comprehension blocks condensing. ~~Elise~~ Tom + Kevin on "Fall Guys". Sharing continues What's good? tack 5-6 kids read + others comment.	53	T. tells influences of cond. for Kevin — story new (1) Code Red based on T.V. Tom on Bigfoot. Wants to publish it "cause I like it — it's one of my latest stories..." Tom on using ss' names. Kevin on Publication No Code Red, go on "Fall Guys" K works on Fall Guys II. Sharing. AG looks for "new folks" 12.55 have done average.	55
56 SV + David S. Tom + Lisa discuss ideas. "Loneliness" Story w/ Tom + Kevin. Writing ideas. Words "I feel I have to write but something — will discard the idea" among Tom — Jeff's 1st time. Confident of others.	57 Int w/ Tom — I set up Cindy on tape interview of Lydia P. I int. Kenny Small on his ideas + ways of writing. Tom shares Readers — a hit! He seemingly tos have he can't write! AG wants to have kids respond so as to help writer.	58	59 AG tomorrow schedules & sharing Cindy + Chris wk on ~~Students~~ — Answer way to include words in journals. A.G. gets lists of who is where in writ. from kids. AG (outside) reports on Mommy to group's criticism of Tom's violence in writing to little kids	60
61 Start interviewing — follow Cindy's idea as a way to settle down for Art. Susanne + Amy K are last two to publish, others. Chris stuck, needing reconstruction	62 Tom + I tape his Readers Piece — adding his comments on why it sounds copied "firsts" slightly. Tom takes over to share writing. Sharing in 46 rm. today — all called to carpet. But Matt starts it off OK. Then Cindy Kids on book	63 I bring in copies of Bennett newspaper. Tom H. + I search out spot for interview. Use Dick Anderson's office.	64	65
66 AG plays Tom's Interview tape after journal time then publication piece time. To read int. questions. Cindy + I conference her 31 guest. After we all discuss most of Tom's questions.	67 Cindy shows us book from 3rd grade. We agree she'll teach me about her earlier + present journal. Sharing time. Cindy shares piece from last yr's journal "Fox + Squirrel + Rabbit story" — AG encourages ss to bring in other earlier pieces.	68	Christmas Vacation	

Sample Calendar, A. Graves

Sample Calendar, B. Silver

M	T	W	TH	F
		1 expl. "list of 473 rules" day snack intro J.C. "key, back of what goes on in our class": mentions journals, folders "tons & tons of stuff" which go with "All About You" info sheet	2	3 Intro of free writing (10 min and guidelines. Talks after of "process" & they share reactions. (easy, difficult; relaxed; got stuck; privacy; physical reactions
4	5 B.S. confers with S (behavioral) launches into memory chain (real model), from their "couple of days" of memory w. (chart, graph) "useful to get started & for 3..." "and stories" Share memories.	6 (Outpouring)	7 They complete Free W. & share only Process sections. I get copy of that. Intro. mapping to match Time-lines of H.W. on out of school activities "walk yrslf then to school". Hands out ind. maps	8
9	10 Reviews – finishes w.l. maps. "a kind of rough draft" Models mapping with 2 posters Discussion, rehearsal, mapping, ongoing process of gathering info lively verbal flashbacks – he "maps" his teaching experiences in M.A. or	11 B.S. reads while they snack Dean & I confer about his writing SS cont. wk on maps. Andrea & Jennifer confer. I listen. We tour Miller Ave Reviews w so far: mapping & memory chains free writing. / Announcement Write a memory story	12 Revised rewriting - RD due Mon.	13 I wk w/ [illegible]
14 I-126	hol..	hol.	15. [illegible]	16
17 Intro steps in writing pre-writing 1st draft Drafting/Revising Editing	& Review of Wkend wk. Ask?? Goes over editing insert ✓ Frameworks toward ~~[illegible]~~ Tues. Deadline. Discusses w/ problems & Process 18	19 Intro Analogues "Making it Strange" holiday + gives out books cautions them not to do whole book – gives assign.		20
hol.	21	22	23	24

Sample Calendar, B. Silver

Thinking Aloud Memos

Thinking Aloud Memo #1 November 2, 1981 Diane Burkhardt, 8th Grade

What have I learned about this class, this teacher, so far?

If one were to catalogue the activities in Diane's English classes, one would quickly assume that she teaches a model writing class: writing begins on Day 1, right after students' names are called; students keep process journals and idea logs (a place to store private writing and ideas for new pieces); Diane writes, too, and on Day 2 composes aloud in front of her students so that they can observe and describe her writing process; on Day 3 students rehearse various approaches for a letter to Dr. Bell about the changes in the Middle School; on Day 5 they practice the "say back" technique learned last year; on Day 6 they are sharing drafts of their letters to partners; by the fourth week of school they are working independently in writing groups on pieces for publication (deadline: November 19); by the fifth week of school, they've done drafts of several pieces in progress, several in-class free writings and many process entries including short in-class responses to questions like "Do I care enough about this piece to revise it, to take it to publication?" Generally Diane runs the class, more recently we've divided the class in two and each of us has led process discussions; lately two days were set up to provide students with options: they can work on revisions, use their process journals to think out changes, conference with Di, me or a classmate, or go outdoors and begin a new piece.

While this description may approach the ideal, in reality Diane faces a number of problems upon beginning this school year. With changes in the Middle School schedule, Diane no longer teaches English every day: her English class meets either three or four times a week, depending on the rotating schedule, and when it does meet, it is at a different time period each day. While some teachers are merely unhappy with the schedule, Diane finds its inconsistencies devastating because it works against building the kind of rapport and trust that forms the underpinning of what she does in the classroom. Second, Diane's students did not have a particularly good experience with writing in seventh grade. At the mention of process journals, there are groans. Kathy comments that she "wants help to understand them better because last year they were a waste of time." Silence greets Diane's announcement of publishing as a goal for the year. Frequently in the first few weeks of school, students' questions include, "Do we have to do 'x' like last year?" Third, Diane seems particularly concerned about what she labels "the quietness disease." Except for a few outgoing students, her students talk quietly, hesitatingly and occasionally seem unwilling to share what they have written. On Day 15, when Diane asks in response to a remark that "sharing writing is stupid", "Are you accustomed to having people tell you your writing is stupid?" Many students have stories about judgmental comments made by their peers in writing groups about their pieces last year. Thus, initially it looks as if the "quietness" is not only a function of newness or shyness, but also of students' fear of judgment.

This is the environment in which Diane begins slowly to build a community of writers -- based on trust, respect and honesty. She treads a fine line, wanting to build on what students learned last year and yet needing to undo some of the negative attitudes that get in the way of their developing further. By Day 2, she begins carefully. "Compared to last year, some things may be familiar, others different. We may use the same terminology, but we may do things differently." She knows, however, that statements are not enough and it will take time for kids to know they can believe what she says.

Each day she lets kids know that she will treat them with respect. In explaining idea logs on Day 5, she says "I keep one, too. This is just for me." Then in response to the question, "No one reads yours. No one reads ours but you?" she says, "Good question. The same rules apply. I don't want anyone to read mine. I will not read yours." Later that day when a demonstration of "say back" fails because kids immediately respond by judging and evaluating each other's writing, and Margaret asks, "What's the purpose of say back?", Diane responds not only by answering her, but by encouraging them all: "That's good. Always ask what the purpose is if you don't understand." Toward the end of the lesson, when students ask if they "have to write process" for the Dr. Bell letter, Diane knows she can start joking with them: "No. We're going to go slow here, I have to win you over. Soon I'll bring in candy." And in response to Matt's question about whether she wants to check their idea logs, she ends class by letting them know that she won't because she trusts them.

As the weeks go on, Di alternates between humor and seriousness. Classes begin with a reference to the Jets (particularly on Monday), General Hospital, something a student is doing, the schedule or whatever else is going on. For instance, on one day when a girl had her sneaker off, Di begins "You need your p.j., your idea log, your letter to Dr. Bell, you need your mind, your heart, your soul and your shoes. Okay? Ready?" Later that day, she talks seriously about her way of viewing of the process journal: "In the process journal, you write about your writing. You pay attention to what happens. You crawl outside your body, sit on your shoulder and look at what is going on in your brain." Or she talks honestly about what she is trying to do: "I'm working on expanding your notion of what process writing is . . . It's important to me that you understand what you are doing when you explore process."

1-129

In spite of the problems the students bring with them, they also come to eighth grade with a vocabulary to talk about the writing process and some sophisticated notions. After Di composes aloud for the class, one student tells her that it is hard to describe what is going on because "we don't know what you are feeling." Tara, on the other hand, thinks it is easier "to write about someone else's process than our own" because later on "it's hard to look back and know what was happening." Diane D. describes Di's writing process as "Confused. Your ideas are rushing you on and off. Suddenly you start up; you reread constantly, piecing your thoughts together." Mike notices that "You wrote for yourself." Jeff says, "You get dissatisfied or satisfied when you reread." And Tim adds, "You reread, I think, to get ideas from what you already wrote."

In the second and third weeks, Di introduces writing groups and explains why each group uses a tape recorder. She tells students that she wants to be able to hear them "speak through" their pieces and that the tapes enable her to help them with their writing group skills. After listening to group tapes, Di tells the class: "I'm always impressed hearing you talk about your writing, listening to each other. It makes me feel good. I think you are all doing the best job you can . . . I'm pleased." She then introduces things "we can practice" for responding and a major focus becomes showing kids ways to work together without evaulating and judging each other's writing. She begins again with active listening and talks about the listener "as an active participant." She introduces a "holistic" (brief) response to the whole piece and asks students for alternatives for "saying back everything." Kathy and Seth agree that readers can say what they feel; Kristen says you can "give a picture," Diane D. says you can tell "what point got across." Nancy explains that as a writer "I have a picture in my head. I want to see if they have the same one." And Regina demonstrates how to move beyond a literal "say back": "You give the whole message in a few words. We don't need to repeat, 'You have a dog named Spot.' We know more than that. We can say, 'I can tell you really love your dog named Spot.'"

These responses do not develop all at once. What Diane is particularly skillful at is building classroom talk, relying on kids' responses as a way to make points. Often she opens with a question and then directs her gaze around the room waiting for responses. Sometimes she stands at the board and writes down what the students say. Other times, after a discussion, she leaves her chair in the circle, moves to the board and asks the kids to summarize what they've said. As a result, it is the students -- their ideas, their talk and their writing -- that form the center of this class.

As students begin to understand what is expected of them in writing groups and they are given some latitude about what and when to write, conditions seem to ease. Brian, who early on said he "hated process," begins to use his journal "to plan new stories." Tim who did no homework the second class takes a piece through several revisions. While many students still seem hesitant and have not yet made a serious commitment to writing, much has already changed.

What emerges now as an important focus are the students themselves. Will they develop better listening skills for writing groups? Are their attitudes about the writing process really changing? If so, how do they view this change? What are their notions of revision? How do they incorporate suggestions from peers, from Diane or from me into their writing? What can we tell from an analysis of their process journals? How many kids will move to producing "impelled" writing? What kind of impact do Di's conferences with kids have? What develops there?

Finally, one other question to think about: What really accounts for the change in this classroom -- consistency? Honesty? Following through? Or something we have yet to think of?

vg-11/3/81

Thinking Aloud Memo #2 Diane's class January 1

MAJOR EVENTS

Class Publication completed by November 23

Kids went from writing groups to editing groups. An editing checklist was elicited from the kids in advance. Diane also brought in a piece of her own writing with deliberate errors and asked class to edit. Problem was "hyper correction". Margaret insisted that perfectly fine sentences were "too short". Others insisted that you can't start sentences with "and" or "but". Some good questions, too -- particularly Matt D. wanting to know how to punctuate dialogue. New editing process included having kids work in pairs, reading their piece into tape and editing together during replay of reading. Question: Were most kids pleased with this approach? I recall a few saying that they stopped using the tape and just reread slowly. Diane mainly felt bad about having so little time to spend on editing in context since kids were leaving for class trip the following week. Editing process too rushed for much of it to stick, we think. One other highlight: some kids making excellent use of process journals, particularly Margaret and Chrissy T.

Boston/Salem Field Trip

Everyone but April and John P. went. Three school days were missed. Diane had kids retell parts of trip to me upon return. (Way for them to relive it, reflect on it, way for me to be included.) Lots of special moments, jokes, phone calls, food, witches, museums. Matt D.: "The teachers gave us lots of freedom."

Letters to Authors

Kids writing to students in their class and in Ross' class about pieces in a class publication. Eerie silence when class magazines are passed out. Diane finds it strange. I think it shows a special kind of concentration . . . kids reading each other's published writing. Diane mentions that "one dictatorial thing" she will do is check their letters before they are sent. She returns a few for rewriting.

Kid's comments on Ross' book: "Their stories are shorter." "Lots of stories had no high point." "It sounded like they were reporting." Tom says, "Then I woke up . . . . is a cop-out ending." Diane asks Tim if he agrees. This is a humorous reference to his original ending which each of us said we felt ripped off by.

Also, Matt D. amazes us by mentioning that, like other students, he also felt nervous and embarrassed when his father showed his published piece to a friend.

Poe Short Stories

Two-three weeks spent on reading, talking and writing about Poe. From Margaret's mention of "Unfortunato" to Matt's mimicking of "A-mon-ti-llado" from recording, class was alive. Seth mentions he learned about "irony" in French class . . . "that's where I learn all my English." (Meaning grammatical and other terms.) In each class, size of crypt is demonstrated visually with Diane or a student as Fortunato. Before Diane gives out Point of View writing assignments, Matt asks, "Can I write a play about this?" After being given assignments, Jeff says, "If Poe were looking at choices, what would he do? No way I can come close to him. You can picture it perfectly the way he does it . . ." (Similar to adults' responses in summer with same assignment). Lots of lively discussion each day about the stories and more questions on writing: Jeff: "How can you end with him (F) dying?" Regina: "Can you switch to a narrator?" These suggest to me both an interest in the story/assignment and real wrestling with composing issues.

With Black Cat, some discussion on supernatural. Kids advancing different theories. Near end of discussion, Diane says, "That line reminds me of the devil -- you know that's the last thing [redacted] s would leap to." (Interesting - she now assumes they know enough about her to give credibility to that interpretation.) Near end of unit, kids read pieces aloud - Brian does one from Point of View of Black Cat; Diane DeLuca [redacted] attempts new story in Poe's style; Diane shares a "process journal" entry by Poe. Poe's life is discussed. Interesting questions by Mike S. - "If Poe was happily married, why'd he write such morbid stories?" Test was given at end.

One other interesting thing surfaces during Poe. Diane asked kids to begin the Point of View writing in process journals. Some did. Some didn't. In beginning class, Diane faces issue squarely and asks for "confessions". Seth says, "It's better to fake it than get a zero." Diane argues for honesty. "I'd rather have you write, 'I refuse to experiment, to go along with your reasonable request'." Then she explains: (1) I'm still trying to get you to open up your notion about writing and process, and (2) You have to do it simply because I want you to. (Theme of benevolent dictator emerging again.)

Kathy says she still doesn't know why they do process journals. I respond with comment about their knowing more about their process than teachers know -- they are experts -- process journals is place for them to inform us so we can teach better. In her process journal, Kathy later writes that this and other explanations helped.

Radicals and Tories

Colonial diaries and roles developing. Kids burst into arguments over issues. Radicals start refusing to sing "God save the King." The day when Jeff O. says Tories are doomed - Revolutionary War is coming, kids respond: "He can see into the future. A WITCH! A WITCH! A WITCH!" Diane pulls it back with, "You're in good company, most people who try to figure out the future aren't listened to either." Greg H. surprises us with some rational arguments, seeing both sides of different issues; Kristen seems more involved and some kids write more in diaries than they've ever written in English. During one lively discussion Brian asks, "Can't we read our diaries?" (Is he more comfortable with reading than talking? Did he like what he had written?) During another class, Brian holds up a sign, "Tories tell stories." Kathy responds with "Radicals rot." Lines and points of view are growing stronger. I don't know if Diane has similar questions to Ross about historical accuracy, facts being incorporated, etc. Question: Function of less time to talk or not as big a problem here?

PRCT Practice

Two weeks on business letters, reports and persuasive essays. At end of practice sessions, Diane mentions that there is a "completely different atmosphere when we work on these things." I ask kids about it. These are some responses: April - "I hate the word limit." Diane DeLuca - "It holds you back from what you really want to write." Matt D. - "I don't like writing on someone else's topic. I like making it up." Diane DeLuca - "It's hard to make it my own if they are giving you directions on how to do it." Diane finally reads from her journal: "How horrible it would be if we always approached composing this way. I used to do that and worse."

Memo #3
Diane, 8th grade
March 31, 1982

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS -- JANUARY THRU MARCH

1st week of January:

- PCT testing all week
- High school orientation
- Book talk selection
- Radicals & Tories: section meetings held
- First piece begun for individual magazines

2nd week of January:

- Continental Congress (Tuesday & Wednesday)
- Kids update info on requests for writing group members
- Writing groups begin sharing of pieces
- Test on Radicals and Tories/discussion of colonial diaries

3rd week of January:

- Free writing done every day for 5 minutes
- Diane begins bringing in models for kids to imitate; interior monologue this week--kids do two

Discussion on usefulness of process journal--most kids don't like it or understand it: "I do it for you, Mrs. B." Leads to first discussion on choices and to process journal hand-out for next week.

Assignment: Write about yourself as a writer based on past process journal entries.

4th week of January:

More free writing

Board meeting on BAWP

Process journal hand-out -- eerie silence -- "I didn't realize all those thoughts I had were process."

Sharing of interior monologues from last week

Model: Detailed sensory description of familiar event -- do one for homework.

Sharing of sensory descriptions

Assignment: Observe parts of building and write sensory description

1st week of February:

Sharing of sensory descriptions

Model: Free verse (poems)

Assignment: Do 1 or 2

Sharing of poems / talk about process

Guidelines for Composing: Leads to discussion of students not wanting to share personal writing. Beginning of trust discussion.

2nd week of February:

CLM test

Booktalks

Interior dialogue assignment on trust done in class

Second discussion of choices, opportunity for writing groups

Kids write about what they would need to trust their writing group members and whether they can be counted on as trusting writing group members

View "Lord of the Flies" (Friday)

3rd week of February:

Vacation

4th week of February

Film: "12 Angry Men" (Monday and Tuesday)

Beginning of Social Sciences media project

(Wednesday:) Trust hand-out -- from kids' journals -- eerie silence

Guidelines for Composing--pieces to be shared on Friday

(Thursday) Process discussions / writing group requests

(Friday) Writing groups -- breakthrough

1st week of March

Writing groups

Film: "Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge"

Discussion on writing groups

Discussion on options -- moving from guidelines to piece of writing

Another piece due Thursday -- different point of view

(Chris incident)

2nd week of March:

Double per. writing groups

Diane introduces idea of theme for magazine

Diane conferences with individual students on themes

Guidelines again (I do them)

Magazine assignment -- hand-out.

3rd week of March:

Some writing group changes

Kids setting own schedules: writing, groups, conferences with Diane or me

Diane DeL: writing 20 page pieces, excited

Writing groups -- going well

Margaret: breakthrough on theme

4th week of March:

Writing groups going -- kids doing more pieces

Parent Conference day

Grades due

5th week of March:

Diane had feedback for each kid on writing group participation, process journal, and pieces -- "progress report" on magazine

Model: Essays written by kids & by professionals

ON PCT TESTING

On Thursday morning after the essay part of the test, kids are talking quietly.

Tom: I had 153.

Costanza: I had 155.

Jeff: It's your fault [Mrs. B] if I fail. were told "was" and "and" don't count.

Tim: You have to have three letters to equal one word.

When we ask if he got this information from a reliable source, Tim says, "At Miller Avenue, I wrote 150 words that I think of as words." Diane asks kids if they were all conscious of the word limit. Jeff answers, "Every sentence. I ended at 130, so I had to add on some 'buts' and 'ands.'"

These are kids who have no trouble writing page after page.

ON RADICALS AND TORIES

By January kids are very much in their roles as radicals, Tories, or moderates. Section meetings occur. The moderates question the Tories, then the radicals.

The moderates: Why do you Tories fear independent?

The Tories: We don't fear it; we already have it.

Kids prepare for the Continental Congress and references to the game occur in other contexts.

> Diane (in English): Let's get moderately serious now.
>
> The kids: No, let's get radically serious.

Signs appear: "Danger is here when Tories are near."; "Don't pay English taxes to a German king." "Vote Loyalty"; "Tory is glory."

On the day of the Congress, kids dress up: Nancy in a long hoop skirt, Jeff in a tuxedo shirt, ruffled wrists, cufflinks ("I'm a rich Tory," he says), boys put powder in their hair and roll up their pants. Diane DeL has on a long dress and matching bonnet. When the Congress is assembled, all rise and sing "God Save The King." Then the speakers from each side present their arguments to the colonies:

> The Radicals: We're only English when they want to tax us. Do you want British soldiers (ex-criminals) with guns living in your home?"
>
> The Tories: If radicals don't want violence, why do they carry guns? . . . I'm proud to be loyal. I have freedom already.

Then Sam R., as leader:

> Sam: Now it's time for the most important choice of our lives. Vote for independence or loyalty. There are no abstentions. We'll alphabetically by colony.

Each colonist stands and casts a vote. Each vote is marked on a large scoreboard by Gina T. In each game, independence--the Radicals--wins.

On discussion how the voting went, Margaret (a Tory speechmaker) says: "I went through all this [speech-writing] for nothing." Kristen explains: "I would have betrayed the person in my diary if I changed my vote." And Costanza: "I personally think the Radicals were right, but the Tories did a better job. So I voted for them. Some kids voted for the Radicals because of history."

In terms of writing, kids produced colonial diaries --a unique form of writing in itself, lists of questions for Radicals and Tories, answers to questions; some students prepared speeches for the Continental Congress, others wrote essays like "Why I'm Proud to Be a Tory." At the end of the game there was a test.

In response to kids' questions ("What will test be like?"), Diane says, "I'm not trying to trick you. The question is, can you relate one thing to another--what logically led to what? Can you remember the order of your diary entires?" Kids look relieved at this suggestion. Then Diane adds: "The purpose of the test is to bring this to a close--not to defeat you."

COLLABORATION: TEACHER AND ETHNOGRAPHER

During the second week of January, Diana and I go over Memo #2 and have several talks. We identify several issues: (1) the "go home and write" syndrome--kids knowing a piece is due and producing perfunctory writing--writing anything, a made-up kidnapping, a murder mystery, a story with Martians from outer space--writing that seemingly is not connected to anything real in the student's life; (2) the need for helping kids connect to something deeper; (3) the need for models as kids will know options available for different pieces; (4) the need for a theme to emerge for each kid for magazine so written pieces for magazine will be unified in some way.

At the end of one talk, Diane says: "It's now falling into place in my mind. We need some whole class exercises. After two or three weeks, we'll have them work intensively on different pieces. They can set their own schedules. We'll have to watch who's digging a pit to fall into and we'll also have to fit editing in."

What follows is the result of this planning.

ON FREEWRITING

Diane says: "It's not natural to write while we're all in a circle." Kids become comfortable moving chairs around, facing the wall, moving into corners for writing.

Diane introduces freewriting: "Hook up your arm to your brain and let go . . . If you don't control it, you can find out what's on your mind. The point is, don't break the connection . . . Some call it automatic writing, some call it freewriting, some call it . . ." Brian interrupts with "stupid." Diane responds, "No one I've read says it's stupid." Brian continues: "I don't understand why we are doing this." Diane: "Peter Elbow says it's a way to pay attention to what's on your mind . . . Start the energy flowing . . . Go."

The next day before beginning, when Brian says: "Just wait til I get some thoughts," Diane responds: "The thoughts are there, Brian, just put your pen down." By the next day, Brian is volunteering to read his aloud and the class is used to "going on atuomatic" for the first 5 to 8 minutes of the period.

After freewriting, discussion begins: "How was it compared to yesterday? Did you notice any difference today? How many stayed on one track? Jumped around? How many jumping minds? How many one-tracked minds?" Tom tells us, "I didn't lose any thoughts. One almost slipped away, but it didn't." Diane DeL.: "I leave out little words, but I just keep going." Mary: "Yesterday, it was about other people, today about me."

We focus then on the process of doing freewriting. We ask kids if they do freewriting in sentences. Then we ask if they think in sentences. Some seem angry at the question and think they've done it wrong.

> Kristen: This is my idea log. I don't like to write like that.
>
> Margaret: You're not controlling yourself if you write in sentences.
>
> Brian (to Diane): You showed us wrong. You wrote in sentences.

Others see it differently:

> Nancy: When I talk to myself, I don't think in sentences.
>
> Chrissy C.: My mind goes faster than I can write.
>
> Jeff: If you really pay attention, you don't think in sentences.
>
> Seth: You say freewriting clears your head--but when you look up, you get more, so you never clear your head.

The process of freewriting leads us to a discussion of the process of writing and we're on to a sensitive area--one that surfaces and overshadows everything else for the next few days.

THE PROCESS JOURNAL ISSUE

On Wednesday 1/20 Diane says: "It's time for us to take another look at process journals. I wrote about it over the weekend in my journal." She reads to class from her journal: "Let's do some research to find out how useful the process journal is. If you went back and reread, what might you find out about how you wrote? . . . I remember our controversy--some of you didn't see value before. I'm wondering where you are now."

Diane then reads a few excerpts from process journals of unskilled college writers and hands out an assignment sheet--a description of how you write. She then comments, "What Kristen said [on freewriting] is right. It doesn't mean anything. Just answer, 'What do you know about yourselves as writers?"

On Thursday, Diane asks kids to share what they wrote. Responses vary. Her goes:

> Brian: I lied about my process in the beginning of the year. I thought I had to do it a certain way. Now there are a lot more things I realize process is.
>
> Kristen: I noticed that sometimes I have the idea, but I don't have the words.
>
> Kathy: I don't write for myself. I'm too concerned about what others think.
>
> Matt M(?): I take notes on different things--then I put them together.

Then, Chrissy C. asks: "Why do we do this?"

> Matt: I don't know.

Jeff: It's for you [Mrs. B]. So you know.

Mike S.: I learned something negative.

Reading it over didn't do anything for me.
I'm trying to please you, not help myself
when I write in process journal.

While some kids say they like it, it's helpful, others "don't see the value of it," and concludes with Chrissy: "I don't hate it as much this year." Discussion continues during lunch with Diane showing her process journal to Matt, Margaret sharing hers with Chrissy, who says, "I'm writing my process journal like I'm walking backwards--even if it's not right, it's the way I know."

Diane comments about this in her journal: "Thursday, Jan. 21, Will this [discussion] be significant in terms of what happens next for some kids? Any kids? One kid? . . . This is the "heaviest" class discussion we'ave had to date. The honesty is the main thing that stays with me. . . . At the beginning of tomorrow's class I plan to say that they have a choice to make about their process journals. They know now (I think) that their process journal is mainly for themselves, not for me. (Do they know this? It's more accurate for me to say that they've been told this.) The choice they have right now is to use the process journal in such a way that it is helpful to them or to have it be a chore, a bore, a drag, etc. . . . Assuming they'd like to choose to make it useful and meaningful for themselves how can I help them? Modeling? Xeroxing several entires from their peers' process journals? I'll ask them what they think would be most useful.

"Friday, January 22. In class Friday, I raised the issue of honesty . . . I stayed out of discussion, exchanges, etc., for the first 15-20 minutes. Then a silence fell. I waited. Finally, Seth said, 'What do you have to say?' I read part of what I had written Thursday night--the part about the choice that is theirs right now and asking their suggestions. Most felt 'models' or 'samples' would be helpful perhaps not from my journal though. I asked that they indicate whether or not I had permission to 'publish' an entry or excerpt from their process journals anonymously. . . . I mention that there seem to be three categories of people on the issue of process journals: (1) those who do it for themselves and find it really useful (minority); (2) those who like the journal okay, and don't really mind writing in it but don't find it useful, valuable, necessary; and (3) those who do it merely because it must be done, who write only to please me, etc.; they find it a drag. Jeff: 'Mrs. Burkhardt, I'm in the second category, but I really want to be in the first one and I would appreciate any help you can give me so I can move there.' . . . All day long I thought of the question of how or why I should or could try to get everyone to use their process journals for themselves. I didn't really think about whether it was a good thing to do or not. Implicitly, I believed that it is. But in our CLM discussion I began to wonder about this. At what point should I 'give up.' Is it cognitively inappropriate for most kids? I will be thinking about this in the next few weeks. . . ."

Over the weekend, Diane puts together a hand-out consisting entirely of excerpts from students' process journals. She describes this activity in her journal: "I have been obsessed with process journals throughout the weekend. I watched very little of the Super Bowl!! The feeling I've had is a very good one. I have worked with a passion for the task. I was pleasantly surprised by what several kids had written--very touched at some of what was shared. I've had little sleep, but feel tremendous energy. I've been driven to read and respond quite carefully/ thoroughly to all the 'What I Know About Myself As a Writer' pieces and then to look for a variety of entires to 'publish.' I guess I'm waging war or something, but with guerrilla tactics rather than heavy artillery. One of the forces driving me has been my desire to be ready first thing tomorrow with some examples of entries and process journals to return. I'm ready and that feels good. Must not get hopes too high for 'results.' It's a personal and individual thing for each kid."

And on Monday, January 25th, in class, she writes: "I am trying to be comfortable with this silence. Everyone is reading the excerpts from process journals. It's been 15 minutes of utter silence--not easy to deal with . . . They are reading things written by each other. Is that what it does?"

Tuesday, she initiates a discussion: "I'd like to hear your responses to the hand-out." Slowly, kids begin:

> Greg: I don't write in process journal before I start writing. This showed me different ways to begin writing.
>
> Matt M.: When people wrote in process journal before writing, it was like brainstorming. That helps.
>
> Brian: [reads his reaction:] Good, long piece.
>
> Scott: I always thought I didn't do it right. Now I see lots of people do it the way I do.
>
> Dawn: Lots of things go through my mind that I didn't write down cause I didn't think it was part of the process.
>
> Seth: I like it. It helped me a lot. Now I have more ideas of how to do it.
>
> Kristen: I have a question. A lot of people get off the track of the story. If you do, what would happen?
>
> Diane: When this works for you, you get something out of using it. It's okay to let it go where it wants to.

Tara: I want to try writing during the piece.

April: I learned about extra little parts. Things happen to me. I don't include them because I don't think they are part of the process.

Mike S(?): I thought there was one perfect way to do it--now I see there's not one style--they almost did automatic writing.

Regina still questions the purpose: Why should we have to learn to like it? If it makes it harder, why do it?

And, characteristically honest, Diane answers: I've asked myself that. If you were using it the way I'd like you to and those chose not to, I'd accept that. If it could be for you what it is for others, I wonder if you'd say that. You asked a good question. Maybe I answered with the wrong answer. I think it's an important tool to help you understand your writing and your writing will be better because of it.

Matt, after more discussion, concludes: Now that I understand how to use it, I may become one of those people who needs it.

We shall see where all this leads.

SOME COMMENTS ON MODELS FOR WRITING

After reading a model of an interior monologue taken from Moffett, kids write interior monologues. Brian asks, "Are we going to read? Can I go first?" Kids do well. Chrissy T. about driving into a pool. Tara about inviting people to a party. When Bill P. says his is stupid, Seth responds, "No one will shoot you down," and Brian, "We'll laugh with you, not at you." From parachuting to skiing to being at the doctor, they are great. Kids like them, say they sound "real--like you are right there." Diane reads hers and explains, "Mine is real. I pictured a particular moment in ninth grade. The boy was Stan Medbury. I thought I couldn't talk to him."

Kids do sensory observations. First one is about something they do every day, based on an example by Moffett. Some write the assignment from memory--not as it is occurring. Brian's is detailed. We think he did it step-by-step. He tells us no--we laugh. When Greg reads his observations of mian office, Brian says (to me), "It sounds like you," picking up the pure description of the f.n.'s. Diane talks of focus--of seeing close up and far away.

Free verse is next. We read poems that don't rhyme. Brian thinks "it's classier when it rhymes." Kathy says you're not as limited when you're not rhyming. Diane DeL. comments that this poetry sounds like freewriting: "It's not full sentences--just little bits." Tom says, "The more I read it over, the more I get out of it." The assignment: "Think of people, moments, moods--be humorous if you want. For a source of material, look at your automatic writing. You may find ideas to take off on. Some of it may be free verse already. Try one. If it goes well, do another. Play around with words. Have a good time."

The next day we share poems. I write one at SG meeting. Some kids are pleased with the results. Scott knew immediately what he wanted to write. Others found it harder. April comments, "When I thought of it as writing it was easy, as a poem, it was hard." John P. relates, "My father wanted to read it. He said it doesn't rhyme." We all smile. Matt adds, "Mr. B's poems rhyme," and Diane explains: "He forces rhymes for amusement--but his serious poems rarely rhyme." Margaret reads a serious poem, and the kids are impressed. Diane acknowledges impact kids have on her writing. To Seth, "Last week I didn't write the piece I had planned because you had already predicted it." We go around and read, clapping whenever someone is finished.

GUIDELINES AND BUILDING TRUST

On February 4, Diane did the Guidelines for Composing with the kids. We thought they'd had enough experience with form and that it was time to help them discover something real, something of importance to them, to write about. We hoped they would discover a theme that counted for them, that would lead to impelled writing in their individual magazines. We wondered whether this would work much the same way it does for adults in the summer, but we really had no idea.

At the end of the period, kids respond to the process:

> Mike A.: I could think about what's on my mind. It was good to think on paper.
>
> Chris H.: It's better than freewriting. With freewriting, I feel I have to write, so sometimes I make it up--I pretend. This was good--I could think.
>
> Regina: It brought things out you would never think about to write--little things that mean something.
>
> Chrissy: I lost you after the first question. My thoughts focused on one thing and I did that. It felt good.

Then, when Diane asks if students can take their notes and turn them into a piece to be shared, many kids say, "No, it's too personal."

Diane, surprised, assures them that they will not have to share, but that a piece based on guidelines is expected. This leads us into the trust discussions.

Friday is a discussion developed and extended the following week. Monday was filled with CLM testing to booktalks, so to connecte Friday with Tuesday Diane asks kids to write an "interior dialogue about sharing." She reminds them about last week and how they didn't want to share their writing from the guidelines. Today, she says, "We going to pick up from where we left off by doing some writing." She asks kids to notice the little voices in their heads. She tells them that they can have a conversation with this voice on paper. It starts by asking the voice a question and then writing whatever answer comes in response. Like freewriting, it's done without stopping. The goal is just to keep going, having a conversation, moving from Voice 1 to Voice 2. She then reads one she has written as a model. She says, "Get the two voices going. Write about whether there is something too personal for you to share." I explain too about how to have a conversation with yourself on paper and add, "Ask yourself questions about sharing. Why? Why not? What would I need in order to share?"

The kids start in and then read them aloud in pairs.

Greg: [a] What would it take for me to share?

[b] A miracle.

Diane DeL.: [a] What would it take to share?

[b] Someone I trust.

[Extended samples of the writing are included at the end.]

After kids finish reading, I ask, "What would it take to have trust?" Kids respond: people who won't talk after class, who won't laugh. Sondra: People who take it seriously, respect the writing, and keep it confidential? The kids: Yes.

Diane: How many want that?

Kids nod, raise their hands.

Kathy comments: We all feel the same things.

Diane: We have a chance to do something about this if we want to.

On Wednesay, the discussions grow: on respect, risk-taking. Seth says you have to know people a while before you can trust them. Greg says you can respect people, but not want to share your writing with them. Nancy says that some people have proven you can't trust them. Other kids are more eager. Chrissy says she'd like to be able to trust and take a risk, but doesn't know if she can. Tim responds that it would be easy if everyone would do it. Diane comments, "I want a writing environment that works for all of us. I want writing groups to be safe places--where you can bring what you want."

Diane also speaks strongly about writing: "I understand the importance of writing things that are never shared. That's the purpose of the idea log. Now, we're talking about the writing you will be doing for your magazine. What do you want in it? Stuff that is important to you? . . . What most of you've been willing to share in meeting groups so far is crap. I don't mean to

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put down what you've written. But if I say writing is due, you go home and make it up. The other day, you wrote something real. I want you to write real stuff."

I too comment on the issue: "We have an opportunity til June to make writing groups count. The question is 'what's missing?' trust? What kind? I mention that this happens in the summer with adults--everyone faces the question of how honest or revealing to be--we want to treat the kids like adults, too. This is a rare opportunity."

Diane then adds the next step in this process: "In process journals write about what you would need in order to share your writing with someone else or with a writing group."

On Thursday, kids read their answers: someone who won't laugh, make fun; someone's who's honest; someone who won't take the piece out of the group; they should be willing to share with me too; someone who takes it seriously; someone who will listen, not criticize; friends who will understand; people who are serious, who won't talk at lunchtime; these are repeated as we go around the room.

> Jeff then adds: With people I trust, I could write anything.
>
> Chrissy: If I knew the group would stay the same, I could build up the trust.

Diane responds: That's true. If you would risk one week, the group would move. The first time is the hardest.

April: If I could be in a trusting group, I could also start writing more personal things.

Chris: I'd want that--to keep the group together.

Diane: You're saying here's what I want. How can I make it happen? I've always wanted writing groups in class to be the same as they are for me in the summer. Teachers wonder if kids can experience the same level of trust adults can.

Now one more writing step: In process journals, answer the question--Can I be counted on to give to others what I want for myself?

After kids have written, Diane closes the class: "Everyone of us has just given our word that we can be trusted by others. It's important to set aside past judgments. Allow room for the fact that someone may have changed. There is the opportunity now to create a new level of writing group sharing. You will be able to carry your experience of this with you for the rest of your life--no one can take that away from you." On this note, and after a film on Friday, kids leave for February vacation.

ENGLISH 8
February 24, 1982

OUR THOUGHTS ON TRUSTING OTHERS ENOUGH TO SHARE OUR WRITING

All of a sudden the thought came to my head that all it takes for me to be trusted is to trust others. Is it really that simple? Is that all you are saying? All I have to do is risk. Yes, I can do that.

I need respect for my piece. Someone that will listen and not laugh.

Don't we all want the same trust? Then let's do it!

When I wrote about trust last night, I thought I could only trust ____. Now I think I could trust my writing group. We just have to be willing to risk.

I was so involved in listening to people in class that I forgot I was there. Everyone seemed to serious and mature. I changed my opinions of some classmates for the better.

I would feel good if someone respected me and trusted me enough to share.......I will definitely respect other people's writing.......If someone tells me something very private, I can't tell anybody else about it because it makes me feel guilty.......I can trust my group if I share it.......I would not laugh unless I'm supposed to laugh....I need honest, trust, and someone that will listen and not laugh........I think I am honest and I know I can respect other people's writing no matter what it is.... I don't think anyone should be laughed at when they read their piece because I know how much it hurts when my piece is rejected.

Trust.....I need trust.

I need experience to trust the person.

I need someone honest with me.

I can give to other people what I would like them to give back to me because I know how they feel.

Yes, I'm not blabbing about someone else's piece.

I can be trusted.

It's only fair for me to give to others the same trust that I need from them.

Yes, Sure. I wouldn't ask for these needs if I couldn't fulfill them.

I know I could respect their piece and take it seriously because these are the things I want them to do to me.

I would never tell someone's piece and I would be serious.

I can give trust to people when I am trusted.

I would share if everyone was going to share because then I would be the only one that was taking a risk.

Yes, I could do this because I would definitely demand these for my own story. I know I wouldn't go telling others because then I would not be trusted again.

I'm definitely sure I can treat the other people in my group the same way I would like them to treat me. If I couldn't, then why should they have to treat me good? I think everyone wants this trust.

Yes, I can be trusted. I cant take a piece seriously and not take it out of the writing group.

I need to know they won't tell anyone else.

Yes, I can. If they will for me, I definitely will.

If they depend on me to be trusted I can, I would keep it in the group and give them what they expect of me.

fuck it up. How often as a teacher have I felt that the next work I said or decision I made for the class was very critical. These are the issues and shared experiences that are irrevocably woven into the class fabric. They're there always to be part of us and the special quality of our 'groupness.' I have been very excited by both of these opportunities. I think kids sense their importance just as much as I. They become the BC/AD of our class year as in "Before I saw all the ways to write process entires . . ." or "ever since we talked about sharing and trusting . . ." When I hear kids say things like this . . . I beam. . . . I have always had one or two things like this every year. It's been a while, though, since the "critical moments" have been so closely connected to "THE CURRICULUM."

GUIDELINES, WRITING, AND WRITING GROUPS

On February 24, we do Guidelines for Composition for a second time. Diane introduces this by saying, "Guidelines are always personal, not shared. Don't write in your process journal. Use your idea log. What we do now is between you and yourself. It amounts to notes, phrases, incomplete sentences. It doesn't result in a finished piece of writing. After you do this, you decide how to shape it." Then, Diane talks about the connections between the mind and the body and explains why she will direct kids during the Guidelines to go back and check how they are feeling--bodily. I emphasize that they are creating notes now which may lead to discoveries.

After people have finished writing, we have a few minutes for response.

> Brian: It didn't help me. Maybe it's the subject I picked.
>
> Kristen: It worked for me. I cleared out my mind. I found out some things I didn't know.
>
> Bill: I wrote about the same thing as last time.
>
> Chrissy: I have a piece that's very different from last time.
>
> Matt O.: I have a piece that's personal, but I think I can share it.
>
> April: I definitely have a piece. This helped me. I focused on one thing and then lots of ideas came--I didn't plan it--it just started coming.

FROM GUIDELINES TO PIECES

Diane and I notice a recurring problem. She writes about it in her journal: "It's obvious that many kids don't know what the options are. Those who wrote based upon guidelines didn't 'disguise' much, if anything at all. Also, they didn't really write 'pieces'--basically they just wrote it, raw, unformed, unshaped to achieve a particular purpose. It seems that what must be done is to work on how to take the notes of the Guidelines and put them into a 'public' piece. This will involve discussing all kinds of modes and point of view stuff. . . . Of course, then, there are the kids who never used their Guidelines for this piece anyway."

Diane brings this up in class: "Let's talk about what you do after Guidelines. Lots of you wrote how well it went, how into it you got, how good you felt. Then you went home and looked someplace else for the subject of a piece. Sondra and I discussed this. We think one of the problems is that you aren't aware of all the options--or what you can do with your Guidelines. Some of you think, 'I can't write about this because it's dull or ordinary, or it's too personal.' But let's look at the options. What forms can possibly used in writing?"

On the board goes:

poems--haiku, free verse, tanka, sonnet
  "A poem like Mr. B's 'Tong Lament'--lyric
  Stories--true/fiction
  1st person
  3rd person
dialogues/plays/monologues/essays
  personal / persuasive

diaries/letters/memoirs/
reports/songs/comic strips/
cartoons/biographical entry/

Diane then asks what the options would be for the idea that interests Matt S., "sailing," since his first piece of writing was a poem. Kids volunteer: a memoir on his feelings about sailing; a journal entry on a race he was in; a story about it from his mother's point of view; a dialogue between Matt and some sailors; a dialogue between Matt and his sailboat.

Then the assignment: "Write a piece based on Guidelines if you haven't done that already, or, take the piece you write from Guidelines and write it in a different mode or from a different point of view."

At this point Diane and I meet with students to help those who are uncertain. Karen tells me that she had a whole series of questions come to her during the Guidelines and that now she doesn't know what to do with them. I ask, "What about a poem just of questions, or could they become a dialogue, say, between two girls, or are they the kind of questions someone might write in a diary?" With the last suggestion, her face lit up: "Great. I know exactly what to do. Thanks." She ran off to write.

Diane and I both marvel at the powers of this process. Is it writing, the Guidelines, or what? She thinks out loud about this in her journal: "Guidelines seem to work for the kids no matter what. I really amazes me. I need/want to find out from the kids more about why the guidelines work and what happens, etc. I fully expected a rebellion the first time we did it. I didn't think they'd take it seriously at all; thought they'd be furious, joking, not serious, etc. That's why I dreaded doing it so much. I was scared the kids would think I was nuts or lose their confidence in my ability to plan good classes. I think it amazes me almost equally that the second time with the guidelines is viewed positively before we get under way. No one in either class moaned, groaned, said 'Oh no, not again,' etc. So what is it about this that works sc well? . . . I guess before I'm so astounded I should wait to read their pieces. For all we know, they have written, ' . . . and then I woke up' pieces, or 'Martians invade from outer space and kidnap my two best friends,' etc."

FROM GUIDELINES TO WRITING GROUPS

As kids return to class with first or second drafts, they discuss the process of writing and the process of sharing.

> Regina: I took my first sentence from guidelines, but it turned out to have a different meaning for me.

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April: Mine was exactly the same, but it developed more as I wrote. I wrote a dialogue.

Tim: I did an interior monologue.

Jim: I did a poem.

Mike A.: I didn't waste a lot of time thinking last night about what to write. I had an idea during the guidelines.

Patti: I took notes during class, then I put them together, changed them, added different words.

Chrissy: I took my piece right from my notes.

Diane: What form?

Chrissy: An essay or a poem.

Diane: There's a big difference.

Chrissy: Well, I wanted a poem, but it came out an essay.

When Diane asks kids to compare this time with the last one, some respond like Patti:

Patti: This time it was harder for me because it was more personal. I had to stop and say "Can I trust people?"

Diane: But you went ahead and wrote?

Patti: Yes.

Diane uses this for her next point: "I'm glad you mentioned that. I want to talk about writing groups. It doesn't work out neatly to put you just with people you request. I'd like to treat you the way we treat adults in the summer. Look at your interests, compatibilities and assume you will establish trust because you want to and can.

Greg responds: It wouldn't work. I would want to recommend who I wanted.

Kristen feel differently: If you say that, you'll never build trust with anyone new.

Diane: I know some great combinations. They would work if you'd give them a try. I'd love you to let me do that and you give your pledge that it will work.

Diane passes out pieces of paper: "Write whether you would let me put you with anyone or if you have special requests."

The next day, kids are excited. Diane records in her journal on February 26th: "Writing group hub-bub all day--much more importance attached to them today starting with some kids asking first thing this a.m. to know who was in their group--ending just now (a few minutes ago) with Matt, Margaret, Diane and Chrissy coming back late from their group meeting all beaming. . . . Dennis commented that kids were talking about groups in math--how much they could trust, etc. No one reported anything negative to me. I am high from the feeling of investment, commitment, importance they seem to have for their groups. Not all kids of course, but a lot. Ninth person on a Friday afternoon!!! It might just as easily have been Tuesday morning for all the difference that seemed to make.

THEMES

COLLABORATION

We work our way through it--we create it. It's ongoing and as difficult as it is wonderful. It's intrusive and revealing. It produces strains and insights.

Diane (on the strain in January): "I feel too exposed--under a microscope. What if you were an observer I never interacted with outside of class? What if you were someone I didn't respect? When I volunteered last spring, I didn't anticipate dealing with this kind of thing. Maybe I just want you to sit in class and tell me everything is wonderful. Does ethnography always lead to this type of personal examination of self and relationships?"

My response (2/3): "I think this is precisely the nature of ethnography when it's at its deepest. Our friendship, living situation, [redacted], make~~s~~ this more like a true anthropological study than an educational research project. . . . I value it. I can't imagine wanting to do it any other way--by not risking, not asking the scarey crucial questions."

Diane (1/7): "I see that I control what I've written here. I'm now aware of other issues that go right to the core. What am I really doing? How does one class relate to the next? [Later on] . . . How do we get kids to view themselves as writers? We talk of the power of writing.

Do kids experience that? What about a power that comes right at the moment of writing, of shaping the meaning, or of writing from the core of one's being?"

Sondra (2/3): "You asked about our implicit assumptions--what we're after. I think it has little to do with getting kids to expose themselves or to emote on paper. It does have to do with the power of language and thought, with shaping experience in a satisfying way and into a satisfying form--and we can't do that if we don't pay attention to our experience."

Diane's journal, my responses, and our lengthy talks lead us to identify a number of issues--most importantly--whether eighth graders can experience the power of writing. We ask, "Can't we do better than what we've done so far?" And we plan--partner our way through--a series of events.

Diane writes: "You were a very important part of the week and what went into and came out of class. We planned and carried it out together. . . . I felt that this was very important and that I was too close to it to see the whole thing. I depended upon you to help me plan the next step and in class to mention vital points at appropriate times. I truly feel that we 'partnered' our way through the week (as we continue to do now)."

I respond: "I also love our partnering, the way we moved into it, planning, testing out ideas with each other. . . . I think our instincts are often the same in the class. . . . I see now that I have not been willing to be just a notetaker."

We also feel the "strains around the edges of our partnership."

After an SG meeting in March during which Diane was visibly annoyed, I write: "I don't like when Diane resists what I'm doing. It's as if she feels me imposing something --as if I'm asking her to put something other than teaching first, and as soon as she senses that, she gets her back up."

She says that after so much partnering, she "resents" when she feels me pulling away and telling her what to do. [excerpt from journal?--is there one?]

This gets me to think and express my purpose once again to her in her journal (3/30): "I want to convey the deepest and best stuff--to show what's possible when teaching really occurs--and to do that I need to have a sense of the whole--of where we're going, of what's possible and this requires distancing myself and sometimes asking all of us to do that too.

Collaboration means that we continue to examine ourselves and our relationship. Out of this examination comes insight. It allows us to ask probing questions from which we design solutions. As she (primarily) tries them out in class, I participate and observe. We talk about what happens. She returns to the kids and her journal; I to the SG and my field notes. At times, it's hard. We feel the tug of different demands. We are not the same. In collaborating, we serve as sounding boards for one another. My presence enables her to try what she might not otherwise have done. Her questions and concerns get me to say what I might not otherwise have said. As each of us responds, we create the next step to be taken.

THE TEACHER AS TRUTH-TELLER

What jumps out at me is Diane's basic honesty. When issues arise, she listens to kids and she lets them know what she's thinking and feeling. There's a give and take, but she also doesn't mince words. The kids know she expects honesty and that they can expect it from her too.

From her reading to them from her journal to the process journal discussions, to the ease with which kids talk with her at lunch about classroom, as well as other issues, the general tenor of discussion, whether humorous or serious, is one of candor.

There are moments too when she's not only direct with them about their performance ("what you've been willing to bring to writing groups is crap"), but also about how she's feeling: "Look, there's something I have to say. Maybe I have a loudness hangup, but I like class time to be used productively. It scares me a bit. It looks like you're out just to have a good time--it

doesn't seem to matter if what you're doing is related to your writing. Maybe I'm being too uptight--I have to feel there's a nice atmosphere in here" (3/16).
Or, "If I was short with you today, it's because I'm frustrated with this tingling in my hand."

She even notices this in her journal: "Today, when I sat down with 5/6 kids in a circle, I realized that the vibes from me were bad and said, 'I'm not making it possible for you to ask questions of me or to share your thoughts about a theme. I'm angry, annoyed, etc.' I mentioned my resentment at not being able to work and do thing I wanted to do and also my annoyance that Scott was absent, Regina was absent, Seth didn't have a piece, etc. Being truthful got me off the anger for that period, and we talked comfortably about possible themes."

What does this allow for? For kids to be honest--to say what's on their minds. For kids to ask questions and to know they'll be answered.

In the process journal discussions, kids could admit that earlier in the year they had "lied," had made up entires, faked it in order to get a grade. Others now are not afraid to say that process journals don't serve any purpose for them.

It's possible to notice, too, in the classroom discussions, that kids are not generally argued with. Their points of view, at least on the experiences of writing, are valid. How they go about writing and their perceptions of writing are seen as contributions. All kids are encouraged to share. What they say in class discussions is not judged.

One other point about honesty: It's not license for brow-beating, punishing or putting kids down. Diane's honesty is based on "taking a sense of the kid" into account and speaking from her experience of that--her comments are not intended to hurt but to support.

KIDS (WRITERS) HAVE CHOICES TO MAKE

With process journals, writing groups, what to write, themes, points of view, multimedia shows, kids have choices. Diane creates a structure--a context, really--in which kids can act responsibly. To what degree they do so is a function of their willingness and her guidance. Most kids thrive. Some require some watching.

For her, this is not an excuse for slacking off. Rather, it's like setting a stage and letting a play unfold.

Secondly, the choices--what to write, whether to let process journals and writing groups be meaningful--are issues of investment, not competence. Diane's preference is clear, and it's always in the direction of what would enable kids to grow. When that happens, the joy of teaching is almost tangible.

EVERYONE WANTS TO BE TRUSTED

We discovered this, too, when everyone was willing to be honest. Kids don't want to share their writing (real writing--that means something to them) because of past experiences. The fear is "someone will laugh at me," or "someone will talk about me behind my back," "I won't be taken seriously." For kids, probably for most of us, it's easier to play it safe. "I'll write about something that doesn't matter to me. Then no one can get me or, if they do, it won't really matter."

In Diane's series of assignments, though, we find out something else: Kids say, "If I could trust people, I could write anything." Whether or not kids produce "real" writing, then, rests on how they think others will respond to it. They question then becomes, "How do we create a classroom in which kids trust one another?" It wasn't hard. All kids had to do was ask themselves if they could start fresh--forget what they did last week or last year and begin now by being trustworthy. There wasn't anyone in the class who didn't want that and the one person with qualms about a partner situation spoke up. Beneath the facade of "I can't" or "You'll be sorry," we discovered that everyone wants to be trusted.

TREATING KIDS RESPONSIBLY

Kids at 13 and 14 understand. When treated responsibly, they respond. This may be the most startling finding of the study. We were never sure eighth graders could take writing seriously, but we were willing to proceed as if they could. The results are not in yet, but this is what Diane has recently written:

"Thursday after school, Matt D. asked me something he has asked me before about the guidelines. 'What did you expect? You must have known that it would lead to very personal stuff.' I tell him what I've said before, that I was very surprised at that reaction the first time with the guidelines. I didn't really know what to expect, but I certainly didn't expect that. He can't seem to grasp that I didn't know what would happen. I start talking about what I thought I knew about eight graders versus what I know now. Actually, it's not things I know but a continuing awareness that I must not assume I know what will happen or what they will think or do. It's a sense of limitlessness, boundlessness, expansion, an "all things are possible" kind of feeling. Nothing that happens should surprise me. I should be open to their openness. In other words, I know nothing."

CREATING A CONTEXT FOR WRITING

"Proceed as if you know nothing." This is not a flip remark. It's meant to suggest that the limits we place on kids and writing are our own. We don't know how far kids can go or how powerful writing classrooms can be until we set aside our presuppositions and assumptions.

Think for a moment of the ideal: Kids who find pleasure and self-discovery in writing, for whom writing is a joy, who understand its connection to learning, who see their teachers as writers and go to them for help, and who count on their classmates for support, who are fluent and versatile as writers, who can produce pieces of writing in many different forms, who are responsible for making sure their writing is presentable in a public forum, who are sensitive to the difference in form, who appreciate literature as writing and their own writing as a form of literature. . . .

There may be other ways to describe the picture of an ideal student of writing. My focus is not on the words but on what we might need to act as if we took this ideal seriously. We've probably all known one or two exceptional students who functioned the way I describe. We may think that we helped them along or that we had nothing to do with their particular talent. What I'm wondering about is whether we can create a classroom in which all students begin to function like our exceptional ones. I believe it's possible. I think I've even seen it. For now, here's what I think is needed to create a context for writing:

(1) Truthtelling--where teachers are as honest as they expect students to be.

(2) Trust--where people can expect that they will be respected, listened to, and not judged.

(3) Responsibility and choice--where people are given options and guided on ways to make choices.

(4) To believe and act as if students can be trusted to do what's best, when they don't, to let them know it, then to give them the opportunity to begin again.

SAMPLES OF INTERIOR DIALOGUES

John P.:

How come you won't share it?

Because it's stupid.

That's no reason.

Maybe not, but it's too personal.

Yeah, but . . .

But what?

I don't know.

That's dumb.

I'm just too damn shy.

You have to stop somehow from being shy.

Yeah, but not yet, I don't

It's now or never.

It's never, because the real reason is it's too personal.

Oh, now I see.

Tara:

I don't want to share it. Why should I?

It would make you more self-confident and people will think more of you.

But it has nothing to do with anyone in this school and if I did read it some certain people would find out a lot more than I want them to.

They probably will find out sooner or later.

I'd rather later than sooner.

Karen:

Why don't you share your piece with the class?
Because it's too personal.
But if you do, it might catch all their minds.
But can't you see, this is my writing and it's
something I feel I don't want others to know?

Chrissy C.:

Why do we have to share?
Because maybe she wants to see if the technique
works.
Can't we just tell her?
What does it matter if we share or not?
It's too personal.
What would it take to get you to read it?
A new story. I don't mind sharing some of my
thoughts, but others are just for me.

Mike S.:

Why the hell should I let everyone read what's
inside my head?
You're right, why should we share it; it's our
personal thoughts.
People would think we're total queers.
Maybe we should have written something sharable
so we won't have to keep making these stupid
excuses.

Mike S. [cont'd]:

What's the purpose of this? Do they want to get inside our head?

Now, don't start getting paranoid.

It's just too damn personal.

What would it take for us to share it?

I don't know about you, but it would take a lot of forceful action to get me to share.

Me too.

Everyone probably thinks I'm a queer for being so protective.

There you go getting paranoid again.

Margaret:

ME: Hell, Myself. How are you today?

MYSELF: Hello, I'm fine, and you?

ME: I fine, well not exactly, something's on my mind.

MYSELF: Yes, I know. I guess I lied when I said I was fine.

ME: I wonder why they don't share.

MYSELF: Who are they?

ME: Everyone in our class. We shared, why can't they?

MYSELF: Well, Me, does that make us mad?

ME: I don't think we've decided quite yet.

MYSELF: That's true.

Margaret [cont'd]:

ME: How come we can share our personal feelings and they can't?

MYSELF: Who says we share all of ours?

ME: Why we never thought of this. We can share pleasant writing about friends, but maybe not about other things.

MYSELF: I don't think we took into consideration that other people might be writing and might be much different.

ME: True, we only shared a pleasant piece of writing, what we haven't shared was different.

MYSELF: Would we share that?

ME: Should we?

MYSELF: We can't, not to everyone.

ME: Why not?

MYSELF: Well, I think it was nice of us to read about C.C., because it was positive. But I don't know if we should read something we wrote that says not-so-nice things about the people we know.

ME: I feel we should only share things that aren't negative about people that the class knows.

MYSELF: That sounds good.

Thinking Aloud Memo #1 October 27, 1981 Ross Burkhardt, 8th Grade

What have I learned about this class, this teacher, so far?

Ross uses everything about him to teach -- school incidents, anecdotes about students, my presence in the classroom, his own interests, the 90 or so posters suspended from the ceiling and covering the walls, news events, a lot of poetry. As a result, all of the objects in his room carry some special significance -- from the Darth Vader poster called into use on Day 1, "You think he's bad? You don't want to find out what I will do if you don't bring a writing implement to class," -- to the multi-colored signs on the writing process that appear and are pointed to as Ross introduces a new concept. Even chairs and tables are used to indicate particular activites -- writing and reading aloud are done at tables formed into a large circle, with Ross joining the group as a member; poems are recited into a microphone in front of the room to students seated in three long rows; didactic lessons have chairs and tables turned in one direction facing the blackboard; writing groups meet in three's and four's at individual tables. On one morning when I arrived early, Ross, busy rearranging tables into a circle, explained quickly, "I like to have it organized before they come."

Once students arrive, they may spend time writing (often a ten-minute free writing exercise), sharing their writing (pieces they are working on for homework and/or their process entries), talking about the writing process, listening to Ross' writing, studying and reciting poetry, learning how to respond to each others' writing or learning how to prepare pieces for publication.

Except when students are asked to write a letter to him ("Write me a letter about your writing program last year and your goals for yourself this year.") or to Dr. Bell ("Write a letter to Dr. Bell about the changes in the school this year."), Ross does not assign topics for writing. Free writing is used as a way of helping students discover something they can write about, but generally a piece of writing is assigned and students develop their own ways of handling it. To help them see how writers discover what to write, Ross often talks about his own writing, indicating how events and perceptions in his life become the source of his poems and stories; for example, in explaining two poems he had written he mentions the dead cat on the L.I.E. and the stray dog in the morning fog -- "Woah, I gotta write about that," he tells the class. Ross also states quite emphatically, "Want to see me go crazy? Crumple paper and throw away drafts. Do you know why? In that paper may be the seed of the best writing you are going to do." The point is made over and over again -- everything around us is the source of our writing.

During the first few weeks of school Ross establishes routines. Everyone will write, including him ("If I give you an assignment, it's important for me to do it, too"), writing will be shared (by Day 3 everyone has read something to the class), and everyone's writing will be respected. One thing Ross will not tolerate: noise when someone is sharing a piece of writing (If I have a value, it's silence." - Day 10; "If there's ever a time to be serious, it's when someone is reading his or her writing." - Day 12). The day Ross asks a student to leave the class because he is making noise while another student is reading, Ross tells the class "to mark this moment indelibly in your memories so it won't happen again."

By the seventh week of school Ross prepares his students to work in writing groups. Until now, they have practiced active listening in the large group (with Ross and me modeling responses), they have read pieces to a partner and they have read their articles for the DNL in groups of three. Now, to prepare them for independent group work, Ross has devised two plans: in one class Diane, Ross and I train a group of students in a "holistic response" to writing on one day and then become a model writing group for students on another (Di and I responding to a poem Ross has written); in the other class, Di's students come in and spend two class periods "training" Ross' students in writing group techniques. One of our future interests will be to see how well groups function and how closely students follow our modeling and advice.

Other things we also need to look at more closely include revising, the use of process journals and the idea of ownership. After Ross introduces the idea of revision to students (Day 6), Frank asks him, "Why should you write about what you've already written?" Ross recognizes the dilemma and answers in terms of his own revision of him poem, Fog Dog. But will Ross' taking revision seriously be enough of a guide for his students to take it seriously? Similarly, Ross is serious about the notion of ownership. On Day 5, he asks rhetorically, "When does stuff get finished?" and answers, "I can't give you a rule. You decide. You have to be satisfied. You are responsible for your writing." Again, we have to wait and see whether, how and at what point students begin to feel responsible for their own writing. On Day 18, Ross tells the class that he is not pleased with the entries in their process journals. He brings two new signs into class on the writing process and writes long comments in students' journals. Another new focus: whether, how and at what point the process entries begin to change.

Finally, there are several things that come across clearly in this classroom:

1. Ross is comfortable in his room: he moves about it frequently, occasionally standing outside the circle of students with his hands on someone's shoulders; sometimes kneeling down next to students talking quietly or joking with the group; at other times crossing from one side of the circle to the other just to make a point.
2. Ross' love of poetry forms a part of the fabric of this class. This begins on Day 1 with the Team I meeting which Ross opens amid music and fanfare by reciting a poem and continues with his frequent sharing of the poems he is working on and the poetry recitations every few weeks (even he and I do them).
3. Ross shares with the class not only his expectations of them, but his pleasure when they live up to his demands: after kids read aloud on Day 1, he says "I thank you." After a process discussion on Day 3, he concludes class with "Thank you. I thoroughly enjoyed this." After the first poetry recitation on Day 7, "I was pleased with your support and participation. That's important to me." And after reading some BUMP journal entries (a social studies assignment), "I really enjoyed reading your BUMP journals. I learned so much. You were an incredible audience."

So far, I've learned that Ross' statement "Everything is grist for the mill" is realized in this room. Events are carefully orchestrated, an early experience serves as the point of departure for a later one, reflection is ongoing. In this room Ross composes not only writing but also a world.

Thinking Aloud Memo #2   Notes on Ross' Class   December 30, 1981

MAJOR EVENTS

A class publication was completed by Parent Conference Day - November 20, 1981

To do this, writing groups became editing groups; typed copies were proofread; Ross wrestled with the problem of "correcting" student writing that was technically "incorrect". He decided to leave it the way the author created it and let the authors learn the notion of being responsible for their own work.

Letters to authors were exchanged

Students wrote to two people in Ross' class and to two authors in Diane's class. I have no data on what happened when they received them. Any response? Did they save them? (How did kids view this activity?)

BUMP has become "Life's Tough, Ain't It?"

Activities have been moved into English class. Kids working intermittently on committees, slides, logo, etc. Interesting discussion about whether logo should be "cute" or "serious". Kids divided on this. Not resolved yet, I think. Ross expresses "nervousness" about committee work . . . when he's not sure what kids are doing. Interviews introduced here. On one of my visits to social studies, Ross interviews me as model for kids.

Also when kids are discussing possible logos, Ross reminds them that the show is their's: "If you spell it TUFF, you're going for cuteness, I think. It's a choice you have to make. You are kids making this. You will have to live with it for the rest of your lives." (Day 50)

DNL

One piece due for DNL after Thanksgiving. Done in one week span with one writing group (I think). (I did not see any of this writing because the Deans and David S. were here.) (3 kids published - Becky, Bob P, Debbie Horton)

Work on PRCT's

Practice writing sessions occurred the last week of December. Kids wrote business letters, reports and essay. Some were exchanged for proofreading. Sample reading passages were also done. RCT's scheduled for first week in January. Rob, reading Ross' letter, jokes, "I'm going to smoke you."

Poetry Recitations

Three were done since last memo. Two memorized. One read from scripts. Shruti, Becky, Frank and I did "The Raven".

Ongoing Writing Assignments

Kids continue to write in class -- ten minutes free writing, an occasional exercise ("describe something in slow motion"), process entries continue. Between ICW's and homework, about one piece per week is due.

On Ross

He continues to make slide shows (for Bay Area, Strotman and Dartmouth), writes in his journal, is encouraging Don Strotman to use writing in science, does research with case study kids, continues to write poems and share them with his class and/or eighth grade team, goes carolling with students, attends concerts, wrestling matches and volleyball games at school, maintains a conscious concern that the Middle School not lose sight of its mission, dines with the Deans, and graciously allows all kinds of visitors into his classroom.

Questions he has come to so far include:

How do I get kids to really care about what they write?
Are kids only producing perfunctory pieces?
How do I conduct a writing conference?
Why do I know to do 3, 4, 5 drafts without feedback?
How did I learn that?
* Is it me, Ross Burkhardt, students write for or is it Bay Area that is clear to them and allows them an audience and a sense of power?
I have not resolved whole thing about writing groups or about the teaching of literature. What happens if kids get "addicted" to my comments on papers? What effect on model?

Continuing Themes

(Some of these are themes in his journal which appear as statements/comments in class — theme in journal is actually grounded in class - can be seen in his behavior)

Ross using himself as model; sharing his own feelings, perceptions and thoughts.

When he makes a mistake doing a poetry recitation and kids laugh, "I don't laugh at you . . . I'm a person before I'm a teacher." (Day 33)

When he's not sure of something: "I feel discombobulated. Too many things going on. You know, car in winter, wheels spin and don't go anywhere." (Day 52)

On David Smith's observation of Ross (arguing freely with kids; bending down on knees): "I was cheered up by his observations. You made me feel good." (Day 58)

On Christmas dinner: "Arthur touched my heart (said in relation to reading passage) at dinner last night." (Day 67)

Writing Process Concepts

On BUMP interviews: "We're learning about our audience, parents, teachers who will see it." (Day 36)

On BUMP title: "You will have to live with what you decide. You are the kids making this." (Day 50)

Actions have consequences/discipline

This activity (editing groups) does not work if you change your mind. You need to stick to what you tell me. You have to respect me and your classmates if you say something. Lee messed me up . . . Becky, other, didn't have copies. I bust my a-- butt (laughs) getting things done. I expect the same from you. I'll point it out when you don't do it. (Day 37)

(Kids making too much noise - not paying attention) You will have your time. I want mine. I don't think I'm asking too much. I get upset. I'm a human being. You cut me, I bleed. I'm like you . . . Strive to keep a good relationship. I don't like being put in a bad mood by kids who are disrespectful. (Day 38)

Acknowledgement

I had incredible reading experience over the weekend. Thirty-six process journals and forty colonial diaries. "My hat is off to you. You did a wonderful job." Ross reads to them from his journal. (Day 48)

"I was pleased with your writing. Nice to see 2, 3 drafts, different modes. One person wrote that Rob B's poem was an inspiration. (Day 53)

On colonial diaries - "I love what you did, Frank, it's super. Kristy read yours. Yes, it's wonderful." (Day 54)

On poetry recitation: Basically, I was pleased. You worked on dramatic expression, more people put humor, sadness in there. Hearing it was good. (Day 58)

Writing as Therapy

I noticed some kids have been mad, upset, confused. Have used writing. I'm like that. Sometimes I'm so mad, I have to write it cause I can't trust myself to say it. Then I throw it away. I'm not angry anymore. Craig agrees - "Yeah, I wrote two pages once . . . I hate my mother." (Day 53)

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My Questions:

How to sustain kids' interest in writing, move from perfunctory to impelled?
Is it useful to incorporate free writing as a base?
Is it useful to incorporate other techniques? - mapping (R suggests)
How to resolve literature issue (what is it?)?
How to resolve writing group issue?
What will happen in Radicals and Tories game? Will writing other than colonial diaries be done? Should any be done?
What's happened with writing in science? Is it different for English?

THINKING ALOUD MEMO #1 Oct. 13 11th Grade Audre Allison

What have I learned about this class, this teacher, so far ?
What works for the people in this room ?

Writing is central to this class. Audre and her students write everything from memory pieces to responses to literature to practice Regents exams -- and then write about what happened as they wrote, how writing groups worked or didn't, what choices they made as writers and people in the course of writing, and what followed from those choices. And as writing is central to the class, so choice -- of what to write, of where and how to write it -- is central to the process of writing in the class.

Choice, for Audre's class (or classes: I've visited three), often leads to movement. Teacher, students, furniture -- all move in an easy, fluid fashion from one activity to another, from one position to another. Audre describes herself as "the famous table mover," and in fact she moves tables around often: into an open rectangle for large group work, a smaller rectangle for work with part of the class, various arrangements of scattered tables for small groups work. Beyond that, students are encouraged to move -- to make themselves comfortable -- when working on writing: they work sprawled on the carpet in the hall outside Audre's room, at tables in the corners, with backs to the room or feet up on the windowsills if that's what suits them.
¶ Audre moves too: visits around from table to table, sometimes kneeeling beside a student to confer about a piece; sits quietly at a separate table to write; joins the group at a large table for discussion.

Audre is a member of this community of writers: a fellow struggler. From the beginning, she has asked students to take responsibility for the working atmosphere of the room, so that she too could participate in writing: "Let's quiet down so that I can write." She models the behavior of a committed writer, both by writing in front of her students and by sharing with them her struggles and stuck points. She reads to them from her process journal, choosing especially entries that show her discouraged, distracted, dissatisfied with what she has written.

Audre lets her students know she feels strongly about the issue of ownership of writing: she comes back to it again and again, saying in many ways that each student is the owner of his/her piece of writing. "When it satisfies you, that's the best of all" and "A writer can ask for and take advice, but the piece is still his/hers" and (in response to a question about correctness) "The important thing about writing is to say what you want and say it clearly." (then correct -)

In the first few weeks of class, Audre and her students have practiced the skill of active listening -- in the large group, with process writing; in small groups, with pieces students have composed. From the beginning Audre has stressed good listening: "Listen...say back... but don't evaluate." She has backed up what she says with several different kinds of guides to responding in groups, from step-by-step instructions to follow while working to worksheets to be completed after listening to a piece. Both Audre and I have noticed that the most effective groups so far seem to be those whose members "say back" the most carefully. A question we are asking together: Is effective "say back" the key to effective group~~s~~ work, or does general confidence with writing, with peers) carry over into "say back" as well ? If it is a key, how can students who haven't yet mastered "say back" be helped to learn it ?

Audre addresses her students as people who bring with them into her class a great deal of knowledge and experience, about writing as well as about their lives. She has asked students to think about their previous experiences as writers: what helped them and what didn't; what worked for them. "You've been a writer for a number of years," she told them as she asked them to reflect on past writing processes and to begin to build their own models of what works and what doesn't. She asks students to choose their own groups, and then both to respond thoughtfully to others' pieces and to help and direct others' responses to their own. She listens to the students' opinions on assignments, and sometimes changes an assignment for a particular student or group if she agrees it should be changed.

11th grade teachers are subject to pressure from parents, administrators and students to practice test-taking in preparation for Regents and SATs. Audre responds to this pressure by joining Elsa in preparing vocabulary and usage quizzes and presenting practice exams, but at the same time is honest with the students about her doubts about the value of these practices. She points out the inadequacies of test questions, and continues to emphsize the idea that you learn to write by writing -- not by taking tests or doing usage exercises. When she does use test questions in class (topics from a Regents essay, for instance), she tries as far as possible to integrate them into regular writing work, with revision, group listening, etc.

Audre revises her teaching as she revises her writing, by asking for and using feedback from her students. She asks them, for instance, to evaluate the work of their groups, using their comments both to revise her teaching plans and to encourage students to look at and evaluate themselves as learners as well as writers. I see this as part of the process approach to teaching and writing: a recognition that how you go about doing something is at least as important as what you do, what you produce at the end. Audre assumes that her students are more like her than not; that, like her, they will be interested in and be able to learn from the study of themselves as writers and learners. "Process" in this class means more than a journal.

THINKING ALOUD MEMO #2 Dec. 1 11th Grade Audre Allison

Looking Back Over the Last Seven Weeks

In the last seven weeks I've been trying to focus on students. I've watched them, listened to them, tried to make connections between what teachers say and do and how students perceive and act on what teachers are doing. In Audre's classes, for instance, I've wondered whether or not students share my excitement about Audre's teaching; whether or not they will understand and imitate her model. In particular, Audre and I have been trying to look more closely at students in writing groups -- those that are working well and those that aren't -- to try and get nearer some answers to the question of What makes a writing group work ? To this end, I have been following students in three groups: one in which students, for the most part, help and support each other; one in which, for the most part, students attack each other; and a third, in which students, though often full of interesting and relevant things to say about the world, seem to have little idea of how to put their intelligence to work in helping each other with writing. Listening to students and sitting in on groups has been a humbling experience for me: the connections between what we teachers do and what our students see and do seem less clear to me the more I look at them.

I have become a part of the scenery in the three of Audre's classes I visit fairly regularly. Many students have lost their shyness with me, and now come over to ask, "Are you writing shorthand?" or "Are you learning to be a teacher ?" and, often, "What are you writing down ?" In response to the last, I have now read back my notes to every group I observe regularly -- sometimes more than once. Students seem both impressed by the detail of the notes, and puzzled as to why I find them and their talking and writing so interesting. A few have responded to my saying that teachers want to know more about how students see classes; they agree that's something we don't know much about.

"Bay Area" has many meanings to the students in Audre's classes. Enough of them have been exposed to it in some form or other to muddy the waters of any set expectation: for some students, "Bay Area" means a set of techniques that have worked for them in the past and may be expected to work in the future; for others, "Bay Area" is tangled up with what they see as past failures; something that didn't work for them in the past and can't be expected to in the future. In this way, Bay Area teachers in Shoreham-Wading River start at a different stage from teachers almost everywhere else: they inherit, along with the successes of the process approach, its failures.

For even here, in Shoreham-Wading River, surely the best of all possible writing worlds, students' memories of past writing classes include a lot of red ink. In an early discussion of teachers' comments, students dismissed the thoughtful analyses we agonize over for hours: "If the grade is good, I barely read the comment; if it's not, I read it a little" (Sue, Day 3) and "I remember mostly the bad comments, not the good ones" (Tom, Day3). Many students think teachers don't pay much attention to what you are saying, but "get carried away" when it comes to correcting punctuation. Writing groups can be "confusing -- too many different opinions" (Dave, Day 1), and as for revision, "Are we going to write the story a hundred times this year, like last year ? It never gets any better." (Day 10)

So the students come to groups with mixed memories, some eager to repeat past success; some afraid they will repeat past failure. All of which must surely feed into how they then conduct their groups.

Membership in the Period 1 group I sit with varies, but many of the students who have joined the group for shorter or longer periods (Sue, Sandra, Cumhur, Steve, Todd, Cathy, David, Kristen, Doug, John) have tasted success before. From the first, they supported one another. The first time Sue "said back" to Sandra (after a complicated piece, read fast), I asked Sandra if she thought Sue had gotten it. Sandra said, smiling at Sue, "It was perfect; couldn't have been better." (Day 10) Last week, Cumhur was in the middle of reading a long, evocative piece about his grandparents and their small village in Turkey when we were interrupted by a previously scheduled quiz; nearly all members of the groups chose to stay with Cumhur, listening attentively as he read out loud, while around us, in silence, the rest of the class took the test. It's been like that all along: lots of mutual support in this group, real interest in one another's writing -- but also lots of laughter, appreciation of words and word play, and easy flow between large questions of meaning and purpose and small ones of exact words or shifts of nuance. They push on, too; even when they are not enthusiastic about what they are doing (as on the second day of answering questions about Babbitt), they get the work done. Evaluating group work, their main reservation was the thought (Day 11, early in the term) that they might have gone "deeper" into the work.

In contrast there is the 3rd period group consisting of (on and off) Juliet, Tim, Kym, Tina, and George: plagued by absences and missing homework, offering one another very little support and, on occasion, being actively destructive: "Tear it up !" "Start all over again !" "Drop out of school !" (Day 11) They tell me that these and similar comments are "just kidding," that nobody takes them seriously, etc. -- but Audre and I have noticed that no one in the group seems in a hurry to bring in work to be read. A landmark meeting for this group, just last week, was one in which nobody called anybody else "stupid." So far, group members have skipped or refused to try most stages of "say back" or other response -- and yet, somehow (because of the atmosphere of the class ? Audre's support ?) several of the students in this group have written pieces that seem to be important to them -- though in two cases not for the eyes of the group. And one, Kym, surprised us all one day by breaking into satire in response ro the Community Journal letter, and was appreciated for it.

Students in the fifth period group I've watched have confidence in themselves as thinkers, but are wary of the writing group. Dave, Tom, Walter, Steve, and Emil tend to use their writing as a takeoff point to talk about Life -- but they often don't come back to the writing as writing. Dave still insists that "process is garbage" and doesn't work for him (yet does write, and is beginning to revise), Emil pretty well refuses to add to or alter what he writes on a first draft, and they all refuse to follow step-by-step directions for group work -- so hardly ever "say back" or look closely at what one of them has written. Yet inspiration does arise in this group from time to time (for instance, in their indignation over the Community Journal letter), and there's usually good talk going on in their corner.

A new group I've joined in fifth period is showing various kinds of resisitance to group work, including avoidance of the set procedures and destructive "kidding" --

So -- I'm left with more questions than answers. Are the "best" procedures as vulnerable as the "worst" to sabotage ? Are the odds better (as we keep hoping they are) for "Bay Area" than for other approaches to eventually win out over the resistance of some students ? Will the pull of writing and writing groups eventually draw in all but the most reluctant ? (There are some signs of this.) Will the increasing skill at questioning shown by some students and groups pull others along in their wake ? They may. Audre keeps up a patient counterpoint to potential destructiveness, reminding students that "we all know how to correct spelling and what's wrong...That comes easily to us; what we need to do is find out what's good about writing"; visiting groups to encourage cooperation ("Are you hearing from everyone in your group ?"); urging personal reactions rather than general statements about and evaluations of work ("Did you tell her it was confusing or you were confused ?"), and repeating, over and over again, in many different ways, the message: Listen -- Say back -- question; don't evaluate. Will Audre's continued seriousness and support, her insistence that writing and listening are important, to her personally as well as professionally, sway some students? Even in the most resistant group I've seen, there have been moments, especially in the last week or two, when students encouraged one another (That was good"). Will we see more and more of this as the year goes on ?

THINKING ALOUD MEMO #3 Audre February 8

The last two months have been full of frustrations -- as well as some unexpected pleasures. I'll tackle the frustrations first.

Teaching and Testing

The teaching vs testing controversy, present in one form or another since the beginning of the year, has threatened to overwhelm the 11th grade English curriculum in recent weeks. Regents,PSATs, and most recently RCTs -- the air has been thick with them. In September, Audre's first writing sequence was disrupted by pressure to practice for Regents; in October PSATs threw the class off course; in January, the curriculum was completely derailed by RCTs.

From Audre's journal: "Should we treat the State's inane injunction as if it were really a writing task ? ...Perhaps I'll say to myself that the kids have been taken away for a month of 11th grade to be prepped -- programmed -- or -- prepared for later life cheating on income tax etc. Some call it survival." (Jan. 13)

Audre, in her journal, is embattled, angry, at times discouraged. Her own clear sense of what matters is continually at war with the emphasis on testing in the 11th grade. Tests play havoc with the pace and timing of her writing sequences, do violence to her plans, threaten to drown her in a wave of activities she doesn't believe in. Ten-minute vocabulary and usage quizzes invade writing groups meetings; writing about The Scarlet Letter, which the class saw on film in early January, is cut short to make room for RCTs; reading and writing units are rushed, crammed into what space is left between test practices; and Audre finds herself teaching against her own best instincts. "I don't like what I'm doing," she writes at a low point. In the classroom, in meetings, in her journal she struggles to find a way to teach 11th grade honestly -- without sacrificing writing or her students.

Battle lines were drawn -- or, more accurately, underlined -- at the January 25th School Board meeting. In response to students', teachers' and researchers' glowing accounts of writing process work, including a demonstration by six of Audre's students of a writing group in progress, Board members talked measurement: Can we measure improvement in vocabulary and grammar ? Are our children scoring higher on tests ? One Board member described Bay Area as "a means to an end," and wants proof that we are reaching that end. A discouraging evening.

Sequences

Against this background, some compromises. One fully developed writing sequence, in November: a "place" piece, started with guidelines, taken through revising and editing in writing groups, read in whole-class session, published in group booklets. One cycle of readings (books chosen from among four or five possibilities, including Huckleberry Finn, The Autobiography of Malcolm X, Catcher in the Rye), culminating in group presentations to class. Film of The Scarlet Letter, accompanied by writing in response-to-literature journals. (Some students ask to borrow the book. ~~A few~~ actually read it.) Then a split on the rock of RCTs.

Some students in each of Audre's classes had to take RCTs; others didn't. The RCT students spent ~~ten~~ days or so preparing for the exam, either with Audre or with Jim Casey. Students who didn't have to take RCTs (because they will take Regents) worked on their own on an "analysis of literature" packet prepared by Audre, who tried to find something for them to do that would be interesting to them but not so interesting that the RCT students would feel deprived. The group in first period that went before the Board worked on their writing, after as well as before the meeting, undeterred by the Board's rudeness to them.

Other Events

In and around the regular class work, a ferment of writing outside of class, for extra credit and/or to serve some purpose in a student's life: Kristen's angry letter to her basketball coach about unfair treatment of the second team; Glenn's writing his version of the "love triangle" piece written by Alicia; Greg writing his version of what happened between Glenn and Alicia. All unsolicited. Glenn: "I had to get it off my chest." (Day 70) Audre (in her journal): "This is the stuff real writing is made of."

Which brings me back to the joys. Even with interruptions, even with tests taking over, real writing has surfaced too. Audre noted some of the good moments in her journal: "...had an enjoyable day watching everyone writing, completely engrossed... It's a most wonderful feeling to be in a classroom with 24 brains clicking and pens and pencils moving nonstop -- furiously across a sheet of paper -- electrifying." (11/8) "Everyone shares with whole class. They listen perceptively and it is wonderful. Even Doug, Steve and John read. I love today..." (12/2)

And, in these moments when Audre is free to concentrate on what she really cares about, those other questions emerge -- the real ones. How can we support the less skilled, less confident writers so that they, too, can have (in Audre's words) "the good feeling that comes with discovering that you've said something genuine and clear and said it in your own voice" ? Why do some writing groups work better than others ? What makes an effective writing group so effective ? and so on.

Writing Groups

After discussing my last memo, Audre and I found ourselves sharing a number of questions about how writing groups work -- or don't work. The "don't" seemed easy or at least possible to answer: we could see students in some groups aviod dealing with writing and each other in several obvious ways -- refusing to read pieces out loud, for instance; or reading out loud but refusing to comment (or commenting silently); skipping "say back" and in consequence having nothing to say about a piece ("It's good") and, of course, not doing the work at all, or claiming to have done it but "I left it at home/in my locker/ in my other notebook."

What we wanted to know more about was why some groups do work. Our own experiences as members of writing groups suggested to us that genuine interest in other people's writing might be a key -- but we don't know how to teach that. What else is crucial ? We decided that

We decided I would follow one successful group over a period of several weeks, and try to find out.

Some of the members of this first period group (the students who presented to the Board) had worked together before; others were new to the group. All had been chosen by Audre as especially good group members. Some -- but not all -- are also especially good writers. Current members are Sue, Cumhur, Dave, Suzanne, Sandra and (from a different class -- 3rd period) Lynne. After several weeks, a few things stand out.

1) When these students are absorbed in group work, they become oblivious to their surroundings: the rest of the room seems to fade out for them. When we listened, together, to a tape I had made of a group meeting conducted during RCT practice, we were all amazed at the amount of background noise we could hear on the tape; none of us had been conscious of it at the time.

2) They seem to divide jobs or take on roles in the group, complementing each other, each one coming at the writing from a different angle. Dave, for instance, hones in on feelings: "You might write about what it felt like to run -- where it hurt... Get the feelings out there on the paper." (Day 49) "If writing can bring out someone's feelings and their thoughts and make them think about stuff then that's good..." (86) "It makes you want to reach out." (90) He often asks the writer how he or she felt about the topic, or about writing about it. Cumhur will often pick up a global feeling: "It really hits you" (49); "There is much love in the story" (85); "The ending -- it's beautiful" (86). Once he said he couldn't comment on a piece because "it remembered me of something...I flew away." (53) Suzanne will often repeat and underline a particularly striking word or phrase ("'his eyebrows peaked' -- That's good"), and encourage a writer to reach for telling detail: "You should take a chance on it." (86) Sue will often ask a question about a word or phrase that lies at the heart of a piece ("You say, 'but that was all' -- Could you read that again?"), and Sandra, who describes herself as "critical -- picking out what's wrong," will often help a writer sommoth out some lapse of tone (e.g. a paragraph of "statistics" interrupting the flow of Cumhur's piece about his grandparents (86), sometimes giving an example form her own work to show how she dealt with a similar problem.

3) They use "say back" differently -- more flexibly-- than other groups. Audre has explained that "once you really understand what these steps are for, then you don't have to have such a rigid approach" (48); these students don't. They use say back mainly to clarify, when someone is confused about meaning; their first comments on a piece are more likely to do with something important that has struck them than with literal telling back of content. Or they will say back the feeling rather than the fact of a piece.

4) They recognize differences in stages of composition, and allocate time flexibly on the basis of that recognition: spend more time, for instance, working with a writer who is trying to decide what to do with a piece than on one which needs only minor editing before it is finished. The writer himself or herself will often make the decision on this, saying that he or she has a lot to do on the piece, and needs help, or is pretty well satisfied, and doesn't.

5) They are discriminating in their use of suggestions from members of the group. Often a writer will report that he or she has thought about what the group said, decided to follow some suggestions but not others. Dave: "if I think of something (specific example) I'll put it in; if not,guess it doesn't belong there." (90) Suzanne, after the group discussed her "subway" piece at the Board meeting, reported step by

step which advice she had incorporated into her piece, and which she hadn't , and why.

6) They move easily from consideration of specific points in particular pieces to discussion of broader issues raised by these points: Does one write for oneself or an audience ? How can a writer make "universal" messages clear ? etc. (86)

7) They pace themselves -- laugh, joke, take breaks. They are very serious -- and they kid around.

I reported some of the above tentative findings to the students themselves, asking them first if they could describe their own characteristic styles as group members. They were interested, and agreed to think about some of the questions my observations raised, e.g. Do these students act the same way in other classes, other situations, or is their behavior here a function of the group's interaction ? We'll get back to this and other questions.

THINKING ALOUD MEMO no. 4 Audre May 10, 1982

Writing about Literature

Teaching, like writing, is often "'in process' and subject to revision," Audre writes in her journal on the second day of school. As I review classroom notes, Audre's journal, handouts, assignment sheets, students' reading logs, and miscellaneous records of writing and conversation about literature since the beginning of the year, I am struck by how closely the teaching process resembles both the writing process we study and the reading process Audre and her students are beginning to describe. Audre has been working out a new literature curriculum, one based on writing and an awareness of process; the major themes that run through this work have been there, in one form or another, from the beginning, but constant revision has clarified them, extended them, and revealed their depths.

Literature "teaches one what it is to be human," Audre believes--but it does not teach a passive audience. The reader is "an active participant in creating the art."

> If one believes that art is the communication of honest emotion, then the participation of the reader/listener is an integral part of the artistic creation. [Journal, probably about Day 95]

Part of the reader's participation is a recognition of craft: "When kids discover the craft of a story an aha occurs not unlike the aha one feels when our own writing begins to do what we want it to do." She compares the experience to playing music and then to reading a story by Faulkner: "Faulkner makes you participate actively--play his music--become a part of it and this takes work." She tells students that the arrangement of Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" "is just as important as what happens in it" [Day 95].

> I've been trying very hard with each piece of literature to get the kids to see themselves as writers--to look closely at how the writer has created the story . . . What did the writer do that led you to feel --- ? [early March]

The other part--and a major theme of Audre's work with literature--is what the reader ~~begins~~ brings to the story or poem or essay: the reader's history and emotional response, his or her reaction to the work read, his or her questions and changes of mind--in other words, a reading process, analogous to the writing process, which may be observed and studied. In study group, responding to Mary Jane's questions:

> . . . it's the working at it that's valuable--I don't guarantee my product--I just provide a process whereby a product might be born. Summarize, analyze and sequence are not what I'm after--I want listeners to look within--notice what happens inside their heads as they hear, experience someone's writing--and then I want them to recognize . . . what made them feel or react that way--and then I'd be delighted if they could verbalize this-- To allow themselves to experience the writing--to know it and feel free enough to spontaneously react--not analyze. [12/1, Day 52]

She tells students she doesn't want a summary of plot, but rather "your thoughts, your reactions . . . an honest voice" [118]. "Concentrate your energies on seeing what an author says. . . . Trust yourself." Tells them they may see things the most sophisticated critics have missed. "That's where pleasure really comes in reading"--from individual response, from seeing connections that have meaning for you. Reading, like writing, "is very subjective. . . . That's how it is; how it ought to be" [119]. When you read, you bring something of yourself to it [127].

Sequence

In October, after listening to a tape recording of Death of a Salesman, Audre asks students to use their response-to-literature journals to write

> . . . a response to the author: a kind of "sayback." . . . If as you write you find you have something to say about the play, go ahead and write. . . . It might be a large issue--"dreams"; "illusion and reality"--or as small as taking a statement from the play and reacting to it [reads examples]. . . . Just begin to write reactions to the play. [22]

Refers to guidesheet to help those who have trouble. Guide questions for responding to Death of a Salesman:

> What kind of people are these characters? What do they do? What do they say? What do they feel? How does the author tell you what kind of people they are? What significant statement is the author trying to make? How does he show us? What is your reaction? [22]

Reminds students they are working towards "a serious statement" about the play.

Audre writes, too. Later looks up to say, "If it leads you away from the play, to something that happened to you, that's all right." Smiles. "I'm saying that because that just happened to me" [22].

The next day, some students in the Period 3 class say they've had trouble with the assignment. Audre suggests questions they might ask themselves, and turns over class time to more writing about play, explaining, "This is for you to discover the impact the play had on you. . . . Begin to think on paper and concentrate. . . . If you write freely, you begin to understand what you think about something" [23].

Audre models, reading her own response:

> This play is having a very profound impact on me at this time. I suppose it's because my father just died and I remember how over and over he comforted himself by recounting all the things that had gone well in his life....[23]

(She goes on to connect with Willy Loman, throughts about people's/our expectations of life.)

In October, Audre launches the first of a series of reading units. Students may choose among several books offered; this time choices include Babbitt, Main Street, and Daisy Miller. Students are asked to meet in groups to discuss the books and respond to questions prepared by Audre; they are also asked to do point-of-view writing.

Sample point-of-view assignments for literature:

Daisy Miller:

> We see Daisy through the eyes of Winterbourne (he narrates the story), yet Daisy possesses a mixture of qualities that tend to confuse poor Winterbourne. Create a dialogue between an imaginary American friend of Daisy's and Winterbourne. Let the friend attempt to help Winterbourne to understand Daisy better. [10/23]

Babbitt:

> Assume the voice of a teenager today and create a dialogue between Ted, Eunice or Verona. You might discuss the similarities or differences between teenagers today in Shoreham or Wading River and those in Zenith when the story takes place. Your dialogue may be about anything you choose but must make reference to the things that happen in the book.

They write dialogues, diaries, rewrite incidents from other points of view, etc.

Audre tells me that the point-of-view writing, while in some cases imaginative and fun, leaves her unsatisfied. The students, many of whom she taught when they were in 9th grade, don't seem to have added much to their use of point-of-view writing in the last two years. She feels that, as 11th graders, they could go further, do more with writing about literature.

Some students have a lot to say about their books--like the Period 1 group, who discuss Sinclair Lewis's version of the American Dream--but many flounder. Eve says Babbitt "puts her to sleep," but can't say why; Tom says it's "dreary"; others trade complaints ("it's boring") but can't or won't say what bored them [Day 31].

In November, during the period in which students are working on letters to the Community Journal, Audre writes,

> What is it that effective letters have? It is one step to actively listen and enjoy or not, but a second step is to know why? What did the writer do that affected you--and a third step--to describe the response it evoked in you. This takes such practiced concentration. [11/13; approximately Day 43]

Later that month, while students are writing and revising their "place" pieces, Audre asks them to read memoirs by J. Agee and J. Kazin.

November-December. For the next set of readings (including Huckleberry Finn, The Autobiography of Malcolm X, A Tree Grows in Brooklyn, and Catcher in the Rye), Audre suggests a new set of questions. This time, a "What is your reaction?" question, which ended the last set, leads off:

> Here are a few suggestions to help you become conscious of your response to the literature you are reading. Ask yourself these questions and soon you'll be learning to verbalize your response. This of course makes you a more careful reader and a most valuable responder when you're working with your peers on their writing.
>
> What do you like? How does it make you feel? . . . How does the character talk? . . . What does it make you think of? Remind you of? . . . If you were asked to rename the book, what would you choose as a title? . . . Listen to the sounds and the rhythms of the writing. What do they add? [11/16]

This cycle of readings ends with group presentations, just before Christmas. Sample topics for presentations (groups):

> These books have been banned from time to time or it has been suggested they be banned. Discuss why that is so and what ideas in the novel conflict with commonly held views about morality, race relations, the worth of the common man.
>
> Tell what the effect of the book was on you. What did you learn or experience?
>
> Tell about the author's life and work. Show pictures or photographs.
>
> Talk about the author's style. When does the author use his characters to expound his own ideas? When does he disagree with one of his character's thoughts or actions? How can you tell? (This in reference to fictional accounts.) [December]

In early January (about Day 72):

> . . . approaching this business of writing critically about a particular piece of literature. I intend to use of course the B.A. approach but I have to

> discover some way other than point-of-view writing. This may fail, but I was not completely satisfied with the dialogue, diary entries, etc. kind of writing we did with another piece of literature. Well--here's hoping something new will come of it. Writing *about* literature has been deemed necessary in 11th grade so even though I don't think they are *all* ready to do this, perhaps tyring with the Regents kids makes sense. . . .
>
> Do students believe that experience in writing about literature is important? Probably those who are planning to go to college--or those who are ambitious?--or those who are indoctrinated?
>
> Perhaps beginning with a "critical analysis" --(what works, why--examples, etc.--all positive") of another person's paper--another student's paper might help.

While watching a film version of *The Scarlet Letter*, Audre asks students to "speculate" about what's happening, and to record their thoughts and observations in their journals. She is not satisfied with the results. Most, she finds, are "slim pickings"--brief plot summaries, not much more. She asks them to keep journals with them while watching, so that they can put down ideas as they come along, but still finds many "barren." Dawn writes, "The name of the movie was The Scarlet Letter . . . " etc. Eve: "Hester was a lady who broke the law of the land by having a child with a man who [she] was not married to. . . . " Tom: "Many things weren't clear until the end." Some, however, are full and lively, like Suzanne's (below). After the last installment of the movie, Audre asks students to read over notes and "prepare one statement of significance for tomorrow" [77].

"Statements" grow out of observations and are read in class. A sample (Suzanne S., *Scarlet Letter* log):

> The sin has made Hester a strong woman, a woman who can deal with almost anything. She can even try to influence Aurthur, who is not so strong, who is extremely fragile and who is less trusting and self-forgiving. . . . Would somebody smack that Pearl. Talk about brats. . . . Because of Hester's sin Hester feels she must do whatever the child wants. Pearl needs a little discipline. . . . Overall I feel, as clever as N.H. was, the plot was a little far-fetched from reality and all too coincidental. It would be highly unlikely for Chillingworth to stumble upon his ex-wife in the midst of new, unexplored land. . . .

Mid-January [about Day 77? 80?]: "Argumentative writing is no problem if the topic is self-chosen. The problem arises when critical analysis raises its pointed head." Don't ask kids to do critical analysis: "If they want to try because they have made a passionate discovery or experienced a passionate response, well, let them of course but this so seldom happens. I don't believe I ever felt compelled to 'analyze.'"

In February, another cycle of books (including Summer, The Bell Jar, Ordinary People). Audre guides students through free writing on books they've read outside of class, using some of the following questions [2/22, Day 98]:

> Thinking of the book you've just read, begin to write non-stop about that book, or about the author, and continue writing for 10 minutes. . . . [After a while,] Go back and read what you have written. Ask yourself what matters about all these thoughts. How did you feel while reading the book? Were you frightened? envious? happy? hopeful? disappointed? depressed? Explain that. . . . Why did you remember the parts you remembered? . . . Did any one of the characters remind you of yourself in any way? Which one? Why? Did you like him or her? . . .
>
> Go back and read your free writing . . . keep asking questions such as these. . . . Treat your writing with respect . . . expect to find answers there. . . . Now . . . underline the sentences or

> phrases which seem most significant to you . . . mean something to you.
>
> Can you write a general but significant statement about how you responded to the book or how you feel about the book or just what you think is significant in the book . . . or a big question you might have about the book . . .

She continues along these lines, asking students to keep writing and keep examining what they have written for themes, patterns. At one point, asks them to make lists of "ideas that speed through your mind as you think about your general statement"; at another to "underline the items that mean something to you. Can these be grouped as general or specific?"

2/23: Book discussion, in groups, starting with general statement from day before. Additional questions to guide discussion include:

> When was your book written? What can you remember of events happening in the world at the time the book was written. (Not of the time written about.) . . . Does the story push some profound truth that everyone learns sooner or later? What is it? . . . What is the beginning situation in the story? . . . What are the major complications in the "rising action"? . . . Do the characters seem real to you? Explain. [and thirteen more]

Walter takes a gallant stab at The Bell Jar:

> I remember always the feeling of depression and loneliness that the main character was suffering from throughout the book. Always the feeling of no confidence or self-esteem was present in her mind. . . .

He goes on to thoughts on time, which he describes in the margin as "rambling on, on, on." Mostly general statements; not too many specifics.

This unit ends with a test.

February 22 [Day 98]: Audre writes: "Began with focused free writing on novel they've read in attempt to put them in touch with some personal response. . . . I think it was a good exercise to precede a novel test. They used their notes--seemed pleased."

In March, students write "sagas," collaboratively written stories around adventure themes--like episodes for a TV series. At the same time, they read short stories and discuss the process of writing fiction. Audre brings in a piece by Diana Chang about her writing process, and they compare notes. Audre writes that next year

> . . . instead of worrying about the scheme for literature--chronological--regional--thematical--I'll just use it as a way of responding, listening--to a writer.
>
> . . . the discussion of process . . . makes them aware of the craft or skill or art of putting a piece, a story, a novel etc. together-- It can help them see literature. [Day 112]

She goes on to compare to bike-riding and ballet: understanding the process through having tried it, then being able to look at what you and other writers/riders/dancers have done.

In April, Audre's classes read in class and then see the film of A Streetcar Named Desire. During the reading, Audre asks students to write in journals every night. She starts them off with questions:

> What's going to happen next? . . . Predict . . . Guess . . . Do you think Blanche's presence is going to change the relationship between Stanley and Stella? . . . Do some ruminating about that scene. . . . [and] Show me that you're going to know this play . . . that you're going to make it yours. . . . Do something

> with it. . . . Run it through your brain. . . . Ask yourself questions about it, and answer them. . . . What's the point? [and] Keep writing down reactions to what you read and hear. Wnen you look back over your notes, you may find you have a thesis --that's how people write critical reviews. [and] Get busy . . . so that you really have something from the play--not just a vague, fuzzy memory. . . . Do some heavy thinking about the play . . . and writing. [118]

3/15 [Day 113]: Questions given out "in order to stimulate your thinking about" A Streetcar Named Desire include:

> Summarize if you must, but only for a bit. What questions occur to you as we read the play? Can you answer them? How does Williams reveal his characters to us? . . . As you reflect on the action of the play so far, what connections do you make? To your own experience? to your other reading? to other people you have known? to movies you have seen? . . . What can you predict will happen? . . . Let your writing go wherever your ruminations take you.

At the beginning of each class, Audre asks a few students to read from their journals--to reflect on what they've read already and speculate on what is to come. Perhaps because of this, students seem to be writing more regularly.

Towards the end of the reading, Audre encourages students to look back on what they've written, to try to locate opinions that might become thesis statements. When Todd writes,

> It seems ironic that the discovery of [Blanche's] age in the full light, and the confession of her past come out together. It's as if Blanche knew all along that once the veil of darkness was lifted, the truth of her being would be revealed just as clearly as the wrinkles on her face,

Audre writes in the margin, "Great! another thesis statement."

After a discussion in class, Kristen writes in her log:

> I was especially surprised by what we came up with for Blanche. Williams describes Blanche as moth-like. He mentions the fact that her beauty can't take the strong light. In the first scene she tells Stella not to look at her in the light. "I won't be seen in that glare." Moths are attracted to light, but the light kills them.

During the reading and viewing of Streetcar, Audre has tried to get kids to look more closely at their own responses. In class one day, she asks them to

> review your reading process and try to find some incident in your experience that has influenced you to feel the way you do about the play. Try to find out why you interpreted the play the way you did. [120]

For the next cycle of readings, started right after Streetcar, all of the above come together in a new set of directions for keeping a reading log which will lead to "a response paper based on your reading." Students are reading, among other books, The Great Gatsby, The Sun Also Rises, For Whom the Bell Tolls, and A Farewell to Arms.

The log is described as "the search for a topic for your paper." On the direction sheet, Audre suggests

> exploring with the following: [lists them] I began to think of . . . I wonder why . . . I know the feeling . . . I noticed . . . I love the way . . . I was surprised . . . I can't really understand . . . I thought . . . I can't believe . . . If I had been . . .

and describes, perfectly, exactly what she wants the students to do:

> As you are reading your novel, keep a daily log where you discuss the ideas in your book. In this way you will begin to connect these ideas to your

> experience, making the novel your own, a part of your storehouse of knowledge. As you reflect, ruminate, and question, listen carefully to yourself and attempt to describe the effect the book is having on you. This is your reading process. Examine it and take note of what you do with the material you read. Write honestly, respond deeply, admit confusion, expand on the author's ideas, attempt to discover your own. [126]

Reading through response journals part way through the reading, Audre calls attention here and there, with marginal notes, to what might be emerging theses.

And the students seemed to be released: it's as if Audre's question have freed them to ask their own--the ones they need to ask. As if Audre had found the key she has been looking for--the one that enables each student to make his or her own real connection to a work of literature.

So often, as teachers, we work to find the "right" questions about a work of literature. We review a novel, cram in a critical essay or two, try to pin down the essence of a story--to ask questions both stimulating and profound, thought-provoking, yet not out of reach of our students. Our "perfect" questions, however, often fall flat. Reading student logs, Audre and I begin to see why. The students ask themselves questions we would never think of; would not know how to ask.

In these most recent logs, retellings of plot have almost disappeared. One or two students (Debbie, for instance) still cling to them, but the rest are too involved in questioning to be content with mere plot. Todd and Walter, among others, mention reading sections two and three times. Many--perhaps most--of the logs go on for pages and pages: 8, 12, 15. Student after student backs up statement or question with examples, quotations, excerpts from the book.

Some, free to ask the questions they really need to ask, start with almost total confusion. Steve M., on A Farewell to Arms, writes

> I wonder why the book had five different books in it. This book was the first I seen with books and chapters.

Greg (on The Great Gatsby):

> Is it Gatsby speaking in the beginning? I'm confused.

And Eve, also on The Great Gatsby,

> I can't really keep up w/ this book. I feel like I [am] reading one thing and all of a sudden it starts telling about something else. For example: I[t] said how beautiful Toms wife is and how huge and great Tom is, then it will switch to how his house looks like an eyesore compared to Gatsby's house. . . . I don't understand why the characters will be talking about one thing in a sentence and then start talking about someone else. For example, when Mrs. Wilson was talking to Mrs. McKee, they were having a long conversation about feet (?) and all of a sudden something about a dress came in the conversation which didn't make sense.

Reading on in the book, she asks, "Why was Gatsby nervous about Tom being there? Did I miss something?" And then, encouraged perhaps by Audre's and my enthusiastic responses to the first part of her log, begins to write her way toward the beginning of self-confidence:

> There's something very wierd about Tom. He seems to want Daisy more than ever and now she's just coming to her senses (it's about time) and seems really to be leaving Tom this time. I change my

> mind I just realized she was having a more serious affair with Gatsby than I thought. . . . For the first time in the book I understand what's going on.

Audre has asked students to let their minds wander, to allow associations to books they've read, movies they've seen or whatever enters their thoughts and reading logs. A lively discussion in Period 3 one day centered on whether or not Blanche, in A Streetcar Named Desire, was like Tiffany, a character in "General Hospital." Lynne says that Tiffany, like Blanche, acts "as if she thinks she's so great," but is really afraid of being hurt. Lynne's reading log for The Great Gatsby shows an equal involvement in the romantic plot:

> I can't wait till Daisy sees Gatsby. What will she say? or do? . . . Gatsby has a lot of love for Daisy. I'm glad. I hope they get together and she leaves Tom. I never liked him. And I don't think Daisy ever really loved him. . . . I'm so glad that Daisy's been seeing Gatsby. I think it strange that Daisy kissed Gatsby when Tom was right in the other room. Does Tom suspect anything? It doesn't seem as though he does. This whole thing is weird, very very weird. . . . I can't believe it! Daisy told Gatsby that she loved him and Tom saw. Now what? This is getting to be ridiculous. . . . I can't believe that Gatsby told him. Tom says that he still loves her and that Daisy loves him. Daisy told Tom that she never loved him. "I never loved him," she said with perceptible reluctance.

At the end, she draws a conclusion:

> I feel so sorry for Gatsby. Why did he have to die? I wanted him and Daisy to get together. I'm so mad! Daisy and Tom seemed to mess up everyone's lives. And they ended up with no problems but the people they were involved with died. That's a real shame.

Kris S. agrees with Lynne and adds (describing the end of the book):

> He is in the pool and Myrtel's husband thinks that Gatsby killed his wife and he kills him in the pool. At first I didn't understand because the author doesn't just say it out. You have to realize yourself who killed Gatsby. . . . Then this is really strange. No one attends Gatsby's funeral. I thought he had so many friends but then no one showed up. Nick called a few people but everyone gave him excuses. This was a sad ending. . . . I hoped that Daisy and Gatsby would get together. He loved her so much. He even took the blame of the death of Tom's mystress. What a sad ending.

Tackling confusion head-on, many students, like Eve, ask themselves questions about how a book is put together or why certain themes or images recur. In The Great Gatsby, according to Lynne,

> Boy, the story line jumps about. One minute he talks about Daisy and Gatsby, then there's a conversation between Jordan and himself, then he jumps back to the garage. Why does the story jump around this way?

Steve M., on A Farewell to Arms:

> I can't really understand why it rained all the time in the story. Everytime something happened it rained.

Some students try to imagine what the writer had in mind. Emil, in an otherwise skimpy log, imagines himself "in 40 or 50 years," sitting down like Ernest Hemingway to write a book like The Sun Also Rises:

> This . . . made me realize what Hemingway was doing he wasn't writing for my benefit but for his benefit. If I liked his book and bought his book it was a bonus, but the purpose for writing it was to satisfy his inner self and his own mind.

Emil, like many students, picks out what is of interest to him in the book he has read: bullfights and fights between men, for instance, in The Sun Also Rises. The rest is "boring." James find a special interest, "gas masks and guns," at the beginning of A Farewell to Arms and says, "I get a perfect picture of this soldier." Lynne is so intent on the love story in The Great Gatsby that she resents the interruption of Chapter 6: "This chapter is boring me. I don't want to read about Dan Cody and his dumb yacht."

A number are shocked or disturbed by fictional characters' handling of situations they can imagine themselves in. The scene in The Great Gatsby in which Daisy kisses Gatsby in Tom's presence bothered several readers ("He has to mind; it's his wife!"--Kris S.). Several boys responded to Catherine's pregnancy in A Farewell to Arms:

> Catherine is going to have a baby. For this reason I would be very careful about fighting. I wouldn't want my child growing up with one parent. [James]
>
> If I had been Catherine I would of married Frederick Henry so he could take care of me. If she was living she would of needed support and help for the baby and her. But I think she really didn't love him. [Steve M.]

They describe their reactions to the characters and events:

> I don't like Catherine. She's kind of strange. She gives herself to Tenate. She says anything you want, I'm yours. I'll do whatever you want. [James]

Kim D. writes:

> I didn't really know if Ms Barkly really loved him or if he really loved her. Everything seemed so fake about it. I did like the ending though. There, I made up my mind that they did in fact love each other. It was a very big shcok to learn that the baby had died and so did Catherine.

> It really made me feel bad. To think of losing 2 people at the same time. And when he was saying goodbye to her in the room (when she was dead) hurt.

Greg again, later on in The Great Gatsby:

> The incident with the car surprised me. That she walked away from her husband and went with Gatsby. Tom was pissed. I know the feeling.

Tom D. reacts and tries to locate reasons for his reactions:

> As I finish the chapter I feel great sympathy for Nick, as the odd person out of the threesome at Gatsby's house, and as if Gatsby was just using him all the time to find Daisy. . . . While Gatsby seems to be getting what he wants, he seems afraid that it won't be "perfect," the way he sees it. It seemed like he was putting Tom down when he kept introducing him as "the polo player," making him into a physical specimen and nothing else.

John S. reads the book in two great gulps:

> I got up to page 91, about halfway. I love it! I still think things are the same way as far as the attitudes of rich people are concerned. . . . [quotes great chunk of description from book, to illustrate how well F. Scott Fitzgerald does it.] [Later:] Done. How bizarre. This man is weird. By the end, you don't know how to feel about Gatsby, whether to hate him or feel sorry for him.

Sandra, striking off on her own to read The Portrait of a Lady, uses her angry reaction to Henry James's plot to ask questions about effect and purpose, carrying on a debate with the author as well as with herself:

> . . . how astonished I am. Isabel, I feel like ripping her out of the page, roughing her up and saying I told you so. But no she married and stayed with that idiot Osmond. Perhaps there is something here which I do not see. But I wonder why she stays with this man who robbed her of everything that made her significant. . . . Perhaps I misconstrue this however and the author is showing Isabel's strength in facing a bad situation rather than running from it. Nevertheless I have doubts.

Cumhur lets Hemingway suggest broad questions to him:

> In the war lots of things change but there are things which don't change. Frederick and Catherine find love during the war. Especially the days which they spent in the hospital for the whole summer was very good. Being together all the time, talking about love, making jokes, sitting on the porch on the breezy summer nights and watching the city. It sounds lovely, romantic. But on the other side the war is going on. People die . . . soldiers attack, soldiers retreat . . . yet under all these adverse conditions we can find love. . . . What is the meaning of love for man and woman? . . . should we restrict our freedom when there is war; is it fair to please ourselves when the rest of the people suffer?

and ends with his reaction:

> The end of the book effected me a lot. I felt sorry when Frederick did, I felt melancholic when he did, I felt excited; and finally felt I lost everything that I have when Catherine died. It was as if I were Frederick and I had all the experience that he had. . . . The reason might be because I wanted to feel in the same way. . . . Besides this the events which occurred at the time when I read the [book] shaped me to behave in that way. I'd felt lonely, lost; was very sensitive too. Therefore when all these effects came together, I felt sorry, excited, melancholic, and lost everything I had.

to which Audre replies, "Yes, this is the way in which we all connect. Your experience with experience of the novel creates something unique, your own and yet it is also shared."

* * *

Where do ideas about literature come from? Not, in Audre's view, from "outside" somewhere--enshrined, for instance, in the work of respected critics--but neither do they spring, full-blown, from the head of a reader at the moment of first reading. Like the writing process Audre knows so well, the reading process she values is complex and ever-changing; it unfolds in stages as a person reads. As her conviction that there is a reading process as individual and varied as the writing process has deepened through the year, Audre has used students' knowledge of themselves as writers to help them study those works of other writers we call "literature." In the process, many have developed an appreciation not only of the craft of great writers but also of their own strengths as readers.

In a traditional high school English classroom the teacher is the intermediary between author and student. It is the teacher who decides what is significant to study, what is worth attention in a work, and what is not. The teacher asks questions, and the students answer them.

In Audre's classroom, there are no intermediaries. The students are their own teachers. They struggle with works of literature, asking the questions they need to ask in language with which they are at home. In the process, some reveal depths of confusion a teacher would never guess at, while others soar to heights a teacher would never dare to hope for. Many, starting from their own confusions, work their way towards the beginnings of understanding of form and symbol. Steve M., for instance, would probably be bewildered by the kind of question about symbolism teachers ask ("Describe and analyze the significance of weather in A Farewell to Arms"), yet his own observation, "Every time something happens it rained," points to the beginning of an understanding of Hemingway's use of rain. Lynne's page after page of romantic soap-opera-style questions lead her to the observation that Daisy and Tom "ended up with no problems but the people they were involved with died"--a conclusion that a more sophisticated reader might well have expressed in more academic language. And her question, "Why does the story jump around this way?", could be the first glimmer of an understanding of F. Scott Fitzgerald's craft. Among the more experienced readers, Sandra's angry debate with Henry James and Cumhur's deep identification with Ernest Hemingway's protagonist go far beyond what any teacher could think to ask for.

Audre's question starters--"I can't really understand . . . ," "I can't believe . . . ," "If I had been . . . ," etc.--seem to tap into these personal reactions, make them legitimate, give students permission to ask themselves questions not usually heard in school. I am excited by the freshness and clarity of the voices heard in the reading logs; by the power of minds at work released onto the page. These reading process journals, like writing process journals, seem to invite students to extend themselves--to ask more of themselves than we would ask of them. The "honest voice" Audre has been looking for speaks loudly, clearly through the journals. One after another, students observe and often analyze their responses to what they are reading.

When an "idea"--a thesis statement--emerges, it is not from a vacuum, but rather from a rich mine of explored thought and feeling. The students are making literature their own.

THINKINKING ALOUD MEMO #1 Feb. 8 12th Grade Len Schutzman

What have I learned about this class, this teacher, so far ?
What works for the people in this room ?

"Writing is a deeply personal activity," Len tells his 12th grade students (Day 49); one which involves risk-taking and willingness to leave yourself open. You have to be willing to share, at least to some extent and with some people, if you want to do it well. This invitation to take risks, to share personal experience, lies at the heart of Len's writing class; and Len's own openness, as a writer and as a human being, his own willingness to take risks and share with the class, at the heart of his teaching style. It's not that writing has to be confessional, he reassures his students -- many reluctant to chance revealing themselves; just that "you're going to write best about what you know best." (10) He gives the example of high jumping as something not too personal that he himself might write about from experience, and adds, "Some things that are personal I may never want to tell anybody; others I'm willing to talk about with some people. I'm willing to take risks in a writing group because others are willing to take risks too." (11) He encourages the students to join him in taking risks: when Mary hedges nervously around the implication of incest in a fairy tale ("I don't really want to say this"), Len tells her, "You have to be brave in this class." (70)

It was hard uphill work at first. Many students were wary of writing, and especially of writing groups. Some put their fears in words: "It's like a part of yourself...You're opening yourself up, inviting people to take a pot shot at it." (Jeff, Day 11) Len respects these feelings, and acknowleges the achievement of those who reach beyond them. He thanks Cindy for thinking "deeply" about writing (28), and thanks Neil and Scott, the first to read their writing to the whole class, for doing "a brave thing." (15)

If risk-taking is a major theme in this class, then the reluctance of some students to take risks, the willingness of others to try, and the progress of the class in the direction of becoming "brave" is another. Speaking again about writing on personal topics, Len says "I sense you're resisting that." (11) As the year goes on, Len brings to the attention of the students, again and again, his perceptions of what is happening in the class: the process more than the products of writing, listening, learning to share. "I feel I'm not in touch with you about what you are doing with this writing" (11) or "I get the feeling in the group that we're getting to a point where we're willing to trust one another... I have a good feeling about what has happened today." (12) or "I need to know where you are on this." (37) These comments on the process of the class are part of Len's larger committment to asking his students to observe and reflect on what is happening to them while it is happening. During a discussion of writing process, for instance, after actively listening to Cindy, Len stands back to ask Kathy, "What did I just do?" Kathy says, "You asked questions to get her to talk more," and someone adds, "You left some sentences open, so she finished them." (28) Before turning discussion back to the students, Len points out that what he is doing is "modelling" a way of responding to what someone says. He often stops to call students' attention to what he is doing; to open up his thinking about and goals for the students to them. When he gave out copies of the "writers' manuscript" set I brought to school, he also distributed the article by Louise DeSalvo that explains the philosophy behind using manuscripts with students. When I mentioned to Len, after class one day, that I had noticed that most students seemed more willing to take risks than they had been, he brought my comment in to share with the class the next day.

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Len encourages -- pushes -- students to take responsibility for themselves and one another: shows them that they can, and helps them improve their skills in listening to and supporting one another. In additionsto modelling, he gives examples of what supportive comments might be ("I like what you did about that leaf in the stream"), and explains that, for instance, it's hard to read in a large group, "even if you've done it before." Listeners, he says, need to be supportive, appreciative; that way readers will be "less anxious" if not completely comfortable. (15)

Len questions students closely, helping them clarify their thinking, refusing, for the most part, to give answers, and reminding them that they can explore their minds and feelings further to come up with their own answers: "I think you do know, Chris, but you haven't said it yet...."(48) He turns questions back to students again amd again, and asks students to join him in learning how to do this: "Can anyone ask a question that will get Tom to talk about it ?"(12) "Ask him a question, Kim, to help him make what he's saying clearer." (48) When Bob says to Marie, "You should try to..." Len interrupts with, "Stop ! Bob, don't tell her what to do. Can you think of a question that would help her think ? " (12) When a student's question is particularly good, Len often stops to repeat it with an enthusiastic "Good question !"

Building community, Len redirects students who speak to him alone: "Not just me -- everybody." To check that everyone is involved, everyone has a c hance to understand, Len uses "say back" constantly: for listening to writing, of course, but also for checking understanding of literature or even Len's own assignments. Before you comment, he tells students, let's make sure we understand what he/she is saying.

Underlying and supporting this concentration on building cooperation and trust between class members is Len's acceptance of feelings, his own included. "You sound angry," he will say to a student, or "How do you feel about your writing group?" or "about writing this ?" As a participant in the class, writing and revising along with students and observing the same deadlines he sets for them, Len contributes his own feelings as a writer and group member. "I'm overwhelmed by my story; don't know how I'm going to finish it by Tuesday."(19) "I start these stories and they just go on and on... out of control" (62) "I need to tak to someone about this." (18) He demands respect as a writerrin the group: "I need to write, Theresa. If you have a question, let's ask it later." (18)

Academic work had been centered around writing from the beginning. So far, there hav e been 5/X "major" pieces of writing, on topics chosen by the students themselves, a two-part case study, exam essays and some writing about a play read in class. Recently, Len has led students through a unit on fairly tales, mainly reading and class discussion for a while, only now easing into a writing assignment. (Len felt that many students were "written out" by January; needed a change of focus for a while.)

Len, more than most of us -- or perhaps more consistently -- brings himself to class. Whether he is telling srtories about his three-year-old to illustrate a point about the Oedipus complex, or sharing his doubts about a piece of writing or his feelings about a student, he uses himself as an instrument, to measure and shape what happens in his class.

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THINKING ALOUD MEMO #1   October 21, 1981   1st grade Reba Pekala

What have I learned about this class, this teacher, so far?
What works for the people in this class?

Four mornings a week, for a half hour between snack and recess, these 8 boys and 7 girls are discovering the world of writing. Working singly or in small groups, with frequent self-shuffling of places and partners, these 1st graders are talking with each other, composing aloud, swapping and sharing crayons and ideas, and working(drawing and or writing) in large fold-over booklets of 5 pages each. Each is exploring an individual composing process: in coloring and penciling; with dashes and invented spelling; in struggle and success. Each is aiming for publication.

A published book has a history of this sort behind it. Four Rough Draft (defined as "not real good...it can be better")stories, with an inked stamper to prove it, a teacher conference and choice of one, a typed (by RP) transfer of story to white paper(half of an 8½x11"), a titled cover, and a brief biography of the author.

Reba models what they will practice. On Day 4 she composes aloud and with them begins a story from her board drawing of 2 dogs on a bed. Together they write, over 6 dashes:

mi dogs sp on my bied (My dogs sleep on my bed)

As the story continues, certain patterns emerge: that the drawing or writing "doesn't have to be perfect"; that she welcomes suggestions from others, as well as acknowledges we all "have a story inside"; that dashes hold the place for words; and that spelling is invented. David volunteers a tough word for the class to spell and his pronounced superdelilicious becomes for the class sprds. And a final anxiety-deflator--that it "doesn't matter if you write or draw first."

Advancement is a very individual thing. The students are encouraged, not pushed, and Reba notes that it can take them "four or five booklets" before they are "caught in a subject." What works here is that the children are choosing their own topics, working at their own pace and discovering their own composing styles and strategies in a well-managed environment rich in drawing, talking, collaborating, creating, and writing.

THINKING ALOUD MEMO #2 December 8 1st grade-Reba Pekala

How do you handle an ethnographic itch--one that is just out of reach?

After 25 days or so of riding the crest, ethnographically speaking, of classroom observation, we know we were right in "casting a wide net" to capture a sense of a class coming into being, of a group forming itself around rules and routines. Even as we tentatively dropped down to peek at individual composing styles, we sensed an irritant. Moving from an overview of fleeting sketches of this or that child soon meant missing much by our very efforts to cover more. What was slipping away was the detail, the substance of discovery.

So it was time to step back and look at what our cast net might hold. But from where do you stand? To make a closer inspection it was time to spend a couple of days "at sea" with the crew, not just dropping aboard for 1/2 hour visits. Here's a log of that journey:

Day 30

9:00

Class begins with acknowledging the helper for the day (Jeremy). He begins by moving the pumpkin on the calendar to October 26th, leading the class in the pledge, and helping with attendance. Amy reads her first published book "Space" to an attentive audience, and with arm-around-the-shoulder support from Mrs. Pekala is led back to her seat in the circle. A homework assignment using the letters j and d is collected by Reba with lots of one-on-one comment and encouragement. Ever-alert Jaime twice notices aloud my presence: "You're not supposed to be here now!" she's quite miffed about that, you know. The phone buzzes and Craig and Lauren are called down to speech. Meanwhile, because it's raining outside, Mrs. Pekala explains Alternatives program--which includes Arts & Crafts, 2 games rooms, ball games, ping-pong, jump rope, and Library--indoor activities set up for when weather prohibits outdoor play. Kids seriously select choices.

9:30

Class activity shifts to Assured Readiness program. Flash cards review earlier sounds and introduce today's sound: ch as in cherries. Kids call out other samples and guesses including: checkers, cheerios, truck chilly (chili), trauma, travel, etc. She corrects confusion on tr vs. ch and adds "So if you have a letter with a c in it, you better look at what comes next."

1-221

Out comes clay to roll the snakes and shape ch. I watch Dean run his hands ten times over his ch as he chants the sound ten times. "Mrs. Pekala, I'm all finished!" and she answers, "Save your snakes, fold them up a little bit." As mats and clay are put away, the lesson ends with another couple of rounds of shouting out quickly the sounds on cards Reba flashes. Derek takes on all comers.

10:00

In comes Mrs. Gilde pushing a cart laden with peg boards, bowls of marbles and rubber bands, ditto packets, etc. Three different groups form and exchange practice with the visual motor skills part of the Assured Readiness program.

11:00

Cart lady departs and snack time arrives. As apples, pears, banannas and peanut butter cookies appear, Reba announces "After snack today is writing." David shouts out "Good!". Over her coffee, we discuss ch lesson and their confusion on tr and ch sounds. Reba: "They're like little sponges. I love it." Craig rushes to library-wants to be back in time for writing. Natascha off to read her first book to principal. She and Denise (her chosen companion) return immediately because Neil's not there.

11:15

Writing time. I join Amy, Kara, and Lauren at their table. Kara pours two dozen small sea shells onto table top and composes her first page: a sil i lit (a shell I like) and traces shells' shapes onto that page. Others discuss shells and haggle over which ones they can "have". That table turns into a talk fest, but not before I watch Amy draw two purple hills and a big storm--a wild drawing with this explanation:

i we a sea (It was a stormy night)
ni pg. 3

She turns over page, announcing "Page Four" and with pencil and heavy hand on red crayon explains field of "full hot lava". She's losing control of lava, so she pencils it back with a line and writes,

A H L vir (a hot lava)

(she adds this when she sees what I'd written)

Page 5 ends with pencil drawing and:

H L HL HAS (hot lava in the houses)

12:30

After alternatives and lunch, Reba reads Leland Jacobs' April Fool for fifteen calming minutes, prepping them for his visit in November.

1-222

Next is Math Games. As they rest heads on hands she announces, "Mr. Carter, we are just starting our math program. First we do games and then we do worksheets." Kids group for "Just before and After", "More than" and "Animal spots" through arithmetic card games. This is the Winroth Program--2 to 3 weeks of games before worksheets; it's ungraded, self-paced with attention to addition, multiplication, and then subtraction. Parents come in to help. If they finish early, kids could choose to read, write or draw.

1:30

Leaf lesson. Actual samples and four page ditto packet illustrate shapes and kinds of leaves. Kids note pointy and rounded lobes and other features. Then they go through packet and do some coloring in with extra time.

2:00

Gym time. They clean up work area before lining up to go down to gym. By 2:20 chairs are up, coats and lunch boxes are gathered, and Reba reviews two school rules:

1) Not to hurt anyone's feelings.

2) Not to hurt anyone's body.

Once there, Toby takes kids through hall games for motor skills--"tries to give as much one on one time as possible." Lots of bathroom visits and more progressive ball bouncing games: sit, stand,bounce (little, medium, high), until moving throughout the gym. A final game, Farmers & Chickens, wraps up last three minutes and its time to line up, put coats on and file out to buses.

Day 31

9:00

Kelli is helper for the day. She sets weather on the map, handles attendance and pledge and makes her choice first for the day's Alternatives activities. Rest of class bargains seriously for options (today only two can go to certain activities. Natascha cries after losing coin toss and is consoled by class.

9:30

Magic Circle today. Only third time held so Reba reviews rules. They remembe

1) Not allowed to bring anything to Magic Circle

2) No put downs

3) Sit indian style, except if wearing dress.

Today's topic: "A good feeling and a bad feeling." All kids share both and then review.

9:50

Magic Circle is over and five kids from Middle School (Mr. Vlahkis' class) enter as part of Community Service program. Older kids conduct circle, choose games and tell stories. First graders join in with their spooky stories: Robby excellent rendering of his version of "The Monkey's Paw", Kara on a witch/ghost story. Activity concludes with older kids serving ahlloween "goodies": pretzels, popoorn, candy bars, cookies, candy corn--real healthy stuff--I got a plate too.

11:15

Writing time. Craig, Natascha, David, Jaime and I discuss Craig's dinosaurs and I tell them of a mix-up just discovered at Yale on misplaced dinosaur's head. It doesn't match the body it's been attached to in the musuem since 1909. Craig erases and redraws his dinosaur's head.

12:30

After lunch Reba reads Morris and Boris and Tucker is off to read his first published book to the principal. Tucker has a hard time deciding which friend to bring along. Kids offer bribes. Finally heads off with Dean to read to Neil "Super Apple and Super Orange". Then Math Games and Clean Up, and line up for Music.

1:30

Dan Grable leads them in songs, like Barnacle Bill and a scary Halloween song ("Have you seen the ghost of John?/ Long white bones with the rest all gone".) Hands out tambourines, bells, drums, clackers for rousing rendition of "Hurry, hurry gotta toomba" and finale of Miller Avenue School song. Back to classroom for a brief review of ch sound and word recall. Reba adds match, latch, and they add catch, chain, change,"chit is a curse", cheese, chalk. They count up to 17 ch's. Then they prepare to go home from Art.

2:35

Claudia works with them on shapes and textures lesson. Kids collect textures off (sandpaper, doilies, walls, scissors, etc.) and rub them with crayon onto paper. "Hey, Dave, you're walking around with a great texture right here!" (his belt buckle). Kids hand in their masterpieces, clean up and collect puppets from last class and rush up stairs to the buses. Whew!

Kids and Chronology

On Day 32, I stepped away from my notebook and stood behind the video lens to view the class. That perspective focused several observations for me. First you can't take field notes and run audio-visual equipment. Second, you see things differently and cause all kinds of changes in doing so. First graders turn into hams and play to the camera, relishing reruns. More familiarity and exposure to video should decrease this medium's intervention in their writing activities, but I learned a bigger lesson. Panning to include the whole class, "casting the wide net", I was struck by their individuality, their specialness, and that picture helped me know that closer looks at particular students were due next.

The substance of their differences could only be gathered by discovering more. I would need to remember the advice of the poet John Moffitt when he wrote:

"To look at any thing
If you would know that thing
You must look at it long:"

And so, I'll continue with closer looks at individual students. Along with that focus, here's a chronology of what's been going on in Reba's class:

Jeremy

On Day 33, Jeremy produces two rough drafts on "Fall" and "Winter" in one period. He makes connection of silent e first in Nice (Nise), Ice (Ioyse) and then really understands it in (Slide) in Winter.

p. 1) Winter
is nise
I iLie
winter

p. 2) Winter
is fon
Buos i
can scate

p. 3) on ioyse (first written as oys. I work on i sound. He adds ice)

p. 4) And I can

yous
my now
sled

p. 5) But I hav
no hil
to slide
on
("look at that!" he says)

On "Fall", he carries over confusion some had on ch sound (Day 31):

p. 4) My Chrys ("trees")
havit
tord lalrse
yet

Jeremy has been on a quantity kick from the beginning, producing rough drafts almost as fast as he can turn pages. On Day 23 he proudly announced to a small group of us, "You won't believe this, I just finished my 12th book!" and gets stung by Natascha who replies "So who really cares? Right, Derek?" On Day 41 Reba notes "A nonchalant feeling about writing"-he just does it. It doesn't "enthuse him." In art, Jeremy "doesn't care about drawing", his figures seldom have "ears, nose or mouth". Reba recalls an earlier incident when she returned a typed story for him to complete and more than a week later he still hadn't done the drawing. Yet he is pouring out stories, sounding out words quite accurately and bursting with ideas of interest. On Day 54 he adds his suggestion in a conversation regarding Rudolf's red nose. He thinks Rudolf should drink white wine so his red nose "won't show up so much." That is followed by heated debates with Robby over erasers past and present while both shift away from composing.

Day 35

Reba is concerned about the number of conferences she's having and wants to improve the quality of them. Kids are "sloughing off three" to conference on a fourth. She now sees a shift "to a sentence or line on each page "and hopes to upgrade the quality "now they know they can write". Robby, an exception to this category, and we agree I'll zero in on him. "Every day is a different kind of high" for him she notes and we wonder "where his mind's at" and hope to "find out his feelings about what a story is." Since publishing his first book he "just doodles so much."

Day 37

I begin to watch the elusive Robby. It's the day of the Columbia Space Shuttle's first effort to blast off and with the T.V. blaring in the room, Robby begins on a rough draft:

J.C.: "How do you feel about that topic?"

Robby: "Good--you know what I want to write about soon is how the President got shot and all that...I can't write about the Columbia." (Starts to draw in pencil on the cover and says, "The Columbia and other rockets?"

J.C.: "Are you going to write about that?"

Robby: "Yep." (He turns to page 1. Draws and says "There's the seat -- I'm in the seat." As he draws more I ask him to think out loud. "Buttons and all this stuff up on the roof." Runs off for more crayons. Continues drawing and days, "This is the screen, I'm facing away from the screen--I'm drawing and this is the earth and this is Saturn--or whatever has the ring around it." He makes going-around-the-earth noices. "What's that?" I ask. "That's the arrow that shows they are going around the earth." Later he adds a "box for food" and has the "bad guy ship" attack. Turning pages, he adds a runway and wheels. David comes over and says, "The Columbia wasn't in a war." Robby responds "So, I can make it in a war." And then adds "I show myself in the control panel." David answers "Excellent!" Turning last page, Robby immediately starts to write in pencil:

T
H
E N D

and asks me, "How do you write end?" I sound it out and he adds an A before ND--(This makes sense I later learn because Reba says they haven't learned E yet.) I ask "Is it over?" And Robby says, "No, I'm going to make the space ship land on Mars." Then Craig is over to swap rough drafts with Robby and the time is up.

Day 39

Reba delighted: Kids just "came in and all sat together and quietly wrote." Looks like writing time is now at start of the day!

Day 40

Dr. Jacobs and poetry lesson

Day 41

Kids work on their "Big/Little" poems and Reba introduces letter s and shifts to comparison/contrast idea:

Big as	Little as

Derek's start:

Big as	Little as
elfent	latebug

And Natascha's:

Big as	Little as	
a tree	an ant	
a person	a flower	(with lovely drawings)
a building	a blanket	

Reba notes that at least four have chosen Space Shuttle pieces to publish and wonders at giving topics as above two, and what motivates their choice of topics. We'll watch that. As of 11/9 this class has published 45 books (15 kids) compared to last year's 44 books (19 kids).

Day 42

Kara, who informs me she is soon to move, begins to copy published books of her classmates on to rough draft booklets. She is doing this so she'll "remember everybody". What is also interesting is that in copying Derek's book and trying to read it she discovers what she doesn't know. I ask her the title of it and she gets as far as "The Buh" ("The Bear") and ask her what her plan is if she doesn't know something: "go back to it later". As she dopies drawings and words she sounds out each letter and watches me write. She brings over her own book "The Guppies" and tells me she has added something. tad is written in upper left corner of page 3. I ask about it."tee ah duh - tad"-she announces. I ask "what's a tad?"

Kara: "A frog...and a fish."
J.C.: "You're wonderful!" We agree to meet more on "The Guppies" later and she shows me a "felt heart" she is "making for someone special in the class."

Meanwhile the Columbia goes up.

Day 48

I continue work with Robby. We work on "Hiawatha and the Alligator". He "reads" it to me and then switches to show me his "book I made with my mother." I ask, seeing drawings, "You draw the picture and she writes the words?" He days, "She sits down and says 'What do you want to happen here?'" He shows me through "stories" on Batman, The Lone Ranger, "This is supposed to be Silver", "these are very, very bad people right here" (shows a page with swastika drawn) etc. We start to work on "Aliens in Space" and he writes The Alen (s). Then he numbers pages in book 3+4+5+6+....9 he avoids completely the sentence and then starts to play with my extra pen, clicking it absent mindedly. And before we know it we run out of time. On Days 49 and 51 we conference again--and he produces this line in a story about "the world": ADUMANDEV (Adam and Eve) p. 2. On page 3 he draws a cave man. And he asks for another conference "because I have so many ideas in my head."

We discuss how hard it is to concentrate and hope to set up a way for both of us to write. On Day 54 he works on Santa story:

p. 1)	BitI stadup I Hed	(but I stayed up and I hid)
p. 2)	I sawr sit cos	(I saw Santa Claus)

I can't hang on to this little Proteus--but it's sure worth trying.

Day 53

I worked with Kelli on her story "Me and my Mommy." As she watches me record her title, she proclaims, "I spelled everything right--I knowed everything right."

p. 1 says "Me and my mommy are pretty"--slashes 6 dashes and draws the two figures.

p. 2 Kelli looks around, draws 6 red slashes, grabs a blue crayon and writes: Me And My Mommy
B DIG
and asks me "Do you know what that says?" "No, tell me." Kelli: "Me and my mommy are digging." She immediately draws the picture. I try to ask a question about "writing and drawing and thinking" but bomb--getting "I write words and pictures....once I do the words, I try to make-like say when I did 'Me and my mom are digging'I draw me and my mom digging." So it seems pictures represent the idea as simply as the words do. One doesn't embellish or add more to the other but are both parts of composing. Once again I am struck by the mystery of so much of this.

These longer visits in the classroom and closer looks at individual writers feel still elusive and exploratory. For me these observations open more questions regarding topics, conferencing, and sharing writing. They raise questions too about how writing time draws from the energy pool kids have to make it through their days. And on our own abilities to decipher the codes that make these students learn to compose.

THINKING ALOUD MEMO # 3 REBA PEKALA 1st GRADE APRIL 1982

This memo covers the time and events from the new year through March. Since Day 70 I have observed Reba's class ten times and recorded at least as many video sessions in and out of class. My data, therefore, are found in two forms: fieldnotes and videotape cassettes. I would like first to comment briefly on my work behind the camera, then sketch the chronology of events since January, and conclude with a close charting of one student's development as a writer from September to March.

VIDEO: A DIFFERENT LENS

The problems inherent in "successfully" videotaping students at writing are legion. Yet like a young Don Quixote I ventured forth, cheered on by a certain Sondra and Nancy. We knew hours of analysis were needed to study minutes of recorded observation. We knew I would have to set aside my ethnographic notebooks to master the machinery. So I began experimenting, getting me used to the equipment as well as the students. The theory was that through enough exposure to the equipment, it would "disappear" for them. Our plan was then to begin documenting individual writers, representing different abilities, at various stages of their composing processes.

On into the fray. One by one I would invite a student during writing time down to a quiet section of the library and turn the camera on. One on top of another I would sweat my way through a variety of problems: lighting; microphone placement; camera positioning and focus; and especially frustrating, finding a useful balance between being with the kid and not intervening in his/her composing process (under the circumstances).

By next September, when we will need to launch a series of video recordings, we hope to have worked out enough of these wrinkles so that we can successfully document kids' writing. At present, I will not concern myself with analysis of previously recorded data. But for the record I present a catalog of those dozen episodes shot:

CHRONOLOGY OF SESSIONS VIDEOTAPED

WHEN Day	WHO	REGARDING
79	Tucker & David	Exposed MIC in library proper
80	Denise	"Things"
84	Jeremy	"The Library"
85	Jeremy	"Mr Carter filmed me"
86	Natascha	"Florida Birds"
95	Denise	Story & ethical issue
96	Natascha/David/Jamie	pot luck
99	Robby (silent)	"Concentration Camp" story
100	Tucker	"The Big Fight"
104	Derek (silent) & Jeremy (assisting)	"Lassie"
105	In class practice	Writing time
111	Reba & Conference	Chris, Derek, Denise & class

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

Herein is a running commentary, a Joycean log week by week, of what happens in Reba's class as related to the kids and their writing. It is intended as a descriptive sketch not a precise summary; it sets a context for what follows:

an.4-8 Reba and I agree to zero in on one student and select Natascha as a "likely candidate". She works on her R.D. of "A bol rolled into the rod" and conferences with Reba . Piece doesn't go to publication.

an.11-15 Natascha completes "Me" and shares it with class. She and Derek work on companion stories entitled "The Big Snow" -. Reba continues to write on Wednesdays. Kelli and Denise share love stories with Neil. Thursday AM kids play in snow, leaving a note on the board for me to come out and join them.

an.18-22 Kids begin work on capital letters and long A sound. I start video taping first David and Tucker, then Denise in the library.

an.25-29 Two days of videotaping Jeremy. Thursday with Natascha and her "Florida Birds" story. Kids are in writing circle when we return.

Feb. 1-5 I am studying for exams.

Feb. 8-12 Kids continue capital letters, Reba now giving students choices of lines or unlined comp. paper. Another Video of Denise in the Library. Ethical question: "Do you let people listen to this?" comes up for her. Kids continue Wizard of Oz story begun week before (during reading time).

Feb. 15-19 SWR - Vacation

Feb. 22-26 Seventh graders continue regular Tuesday AM visits. Progress with Derek in publication of "The Parakeet" and Robby with "The Man From the Moon". I video Robby on his "Concentration Camp" rough draft. Also video Tucker. Reba notes kids are "capable of value judgments" and of recognizing quality after hearing and discussing Derek's story.

Reba has 3 composing tapes on Jeremy. Capital letters - now to J, K, L.

Mar. 1-5 Video experiment with Derek and Jeremy in Library. Reba and class brainstorm on books for 7th graders - talk about Beginning/Middle/End of such a story. Reba meets with Jeremy - he still not writing. She tries listing idea. No change.

Mar. 8-12 Kids work on RD of 7th graders stories. Begin reading of Charlotte's Web. Also start writing on a planting/seeding idea for Jack's Victory Garden. (Dinosaur steps)

Book Reports ^ Start to stretch down the hall wall. Sight words showing up in writing (David). Robby especially "on purpose" with 7th grader story - Reba pleased.

Mar. 15-19 Inclass Video effort with Jeremy working on assigned topic (letter to Neil to order Gro-lights). Report cards due.

Mar. 22-26 Another writing circle - Kids discuss where they are and help each other along with suggestions and ideas. Class writes on Space Shuttle. 7th graders visit. Still reading Charlotte's Web.

Derek now using chapters in his story "Toto and OZ".

Mar. 29-1 Our Montauk Retreat

A WRITER DEVELOPING - NATASCHA McELROY

For several reasons, Natascha is the ideal candidate to begin with. She is a verbal, active, intelligent child who is able to interact with peers and adults in a range of activities. Secondly, I have a lot of data on her, since early in January Reba and I decided Natascha would be a likely student to focus upon. Coincidentally, she is also the daughter of a friend and colleague of mine from Roslyn, and I know her family and something of her home life. Finally I like her and have formed an easy rapport with her based on our play

why? what does she do that makes you [illegible] and work times together. All of these combine to produce this unique set of circumstances, and give us a solid base to initiate an analysis of a first grader's writing development.

I would like to start by physically describing in a sequential and cumulative fashion, and then examine, through my cut and pasted fieldnotes and a text analysis, her progress as a writer.

[illegible] (cumulative) ?

As the school year has unfolded Natascha has exhibited a growing diversity and range in her writing behaviors. Her neatly clenched right fist has held first crayons, then a pencil, then a felt-tip pen, as she has moved from pictures and dashes to printed "words", and then to script - from September through March. While her actual writing has grown more expressive and facile,* so to have her mannerisms during writing time. Her early habits of "baby talk" and of interrupting me or others gradually faded as she took her work more seriously. Reba notes that Natascha needed at first, "lots of reinforcement and feedback for each written page", that she would "interrupt conferences to show me a single completed attempt at a sentence "(10/14). After this slow start and a perfunctory first book (she just "did it", says Reba) Natascha does indeed grow more involved in her writing. She would lean back or forward to think, starting out to focus on what's next, on an idea or a sounding-out struggle. Sometimes she would hum or sing to herself, or chatter with Jamie or Derek while standing splay-legged over a rough draft. She would share her book with others, pointing out words for them, even holding her book upside down so another across from her could follow better. On one such day, she reviewed her earlier published books with me, observing, "It's embarrassing" about "Dog" her first published book. I ask her what she means and she says, "I'll show you". After reading it to me she plaintively sighs, "It's just not good enough for me"... I don't like anyone to see it because I would be embarrassed." (1/12/82) that is quite a leap from haphazardly reading a series of 27 dashes as "my elephant is in his barn he likes to eat peanuts I hope he is there." (9/21).

Test Analysis

In the chart below I have grouped Natascha's first four rough drafts and published books with two later rough drafts for a developmental depiction of these samples of her writing. A number of interesting discoveries surface one especially being , the increase through time in the number of words and related decrease in the number of illustrations. As her confidence and facility grew, Natascha relied less and less on pictures telling the story (see Appexdix B). Another related change is the consolidation of "writing" strategies toward script (sc) shown in column 5. A closer examination of other aspects of the chart and the appendicies offer further insights into her growth as a writer. A look at the jump in invented spelling between draft #1 ("The Dog") and Draft #2 ("Haunted House") shows her steady grappling with beginning, middle and end sounds. Later explorations in using 2 and 3 syllable words show further progress.

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* See Text Analysis Chart

An area of particular interest to me is the relationship of the skillful drawer with the beginning writer. Here's a child who begins with a clear talent for drawing. When the task is to "tell a story" and the child opens with a dependence on drawing which literally disappears as her writing skill progresses, I'm intrigued. What were her composing strategies? What is the relationship of drawing to writing in the mind of a child with a story to tell? What about the child who hasn't the motor skills and success with drawing? What are their composing strategies? How can we learn more about what kids need to express themselves in school? This chart and accompanying appendicies are exploratory in nature-early probes into understanding the development of a 1st grade writer. Natascha is the first student we have looked at in this way. Thirteen others await a similar scrutiny as we move deeper into understanding 1st grade writing.

	Natascha Text Analysis Chart	Date	Number of Pages	Ink = I Pencil = P Crayon = C Number of Pages Illustrated	(on R.D. "words" + dashes) Number of Words Published	Pictures = Pix "Words" with dashes = W̲ Words = W Typed = T Script = Sc Kinds of Writing	Comparison of 1st Page Texts	Comparison of 1st Page Illustrations
1)	Rough Draft	10/6/81	6	6 (c)	W 17 | D 22	W̲ , Pix (c)	see Appendix A1	see Appendix B
	"Dog"	10/81	6	6 (c)	35	T, Pix (c)		
2)	Rough Draft	10/21/81	6	6 (p)	W 37 | D 11	pp 1,4 = W̲ (p) pp 2,3 = W (p)	See Appendix A2	see Appendix B
	"Haunted House"	11/81	6	6 (p)	34	T, Pix (p)		
3)	Rough Draft	11/9/81	4	3 (c+p)	25	W, Pix (p)	See Appendix A3	see Appendix B
	"Baby Puppies And the Birds"	11/81	4	4 (c)	35	T, Pix (c)		
4)	Rough Draft	12/21/81	4	4 (p)	41	W, Pix	see Appendix A4	see Appendix B
	"Me"	12/81	4	4 (c+p)	40	T, Pix (p+c)		
5)	"I love Mrs. P[illegible]" (R.D.)	2/4/82	6.1	None ([illegible])	100 Syllables I II III 86 10 4	Sc ([illegible])	see Appendix A5	see Appendix B
6)	"Middle School kids"	3/24/82	6.1	None	87 Syllables I II III	Sc (p)	see Appendix A	see Appendix B

TEXT ANALYSIS - NARRATIVE

Page I Discourse - Appendix A

1) "The Dog" text

A heart in a body. It is there forever

2) "Haunted House" text

The haunted house. I am in it.

3) "Dog [illegible] and the [illegible]" text

The dog is happy because he likes fun.

4) "Me" text

I am in my garden!
I pick flowers!
It is fun!
I like it.

5) "I Love Mrs. [illegible]" text

I love you [illegible]. I didn't like the substitute yesterday. Please don't send her again.

6) "Middle School Kids" text

Do you remember the time we were telling ghost stories? I liked it but it

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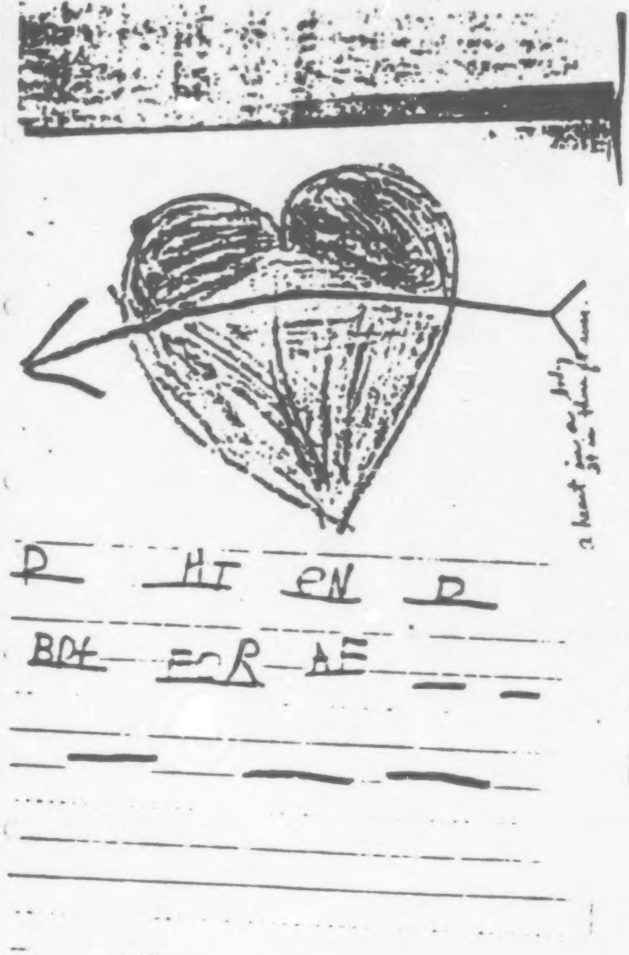
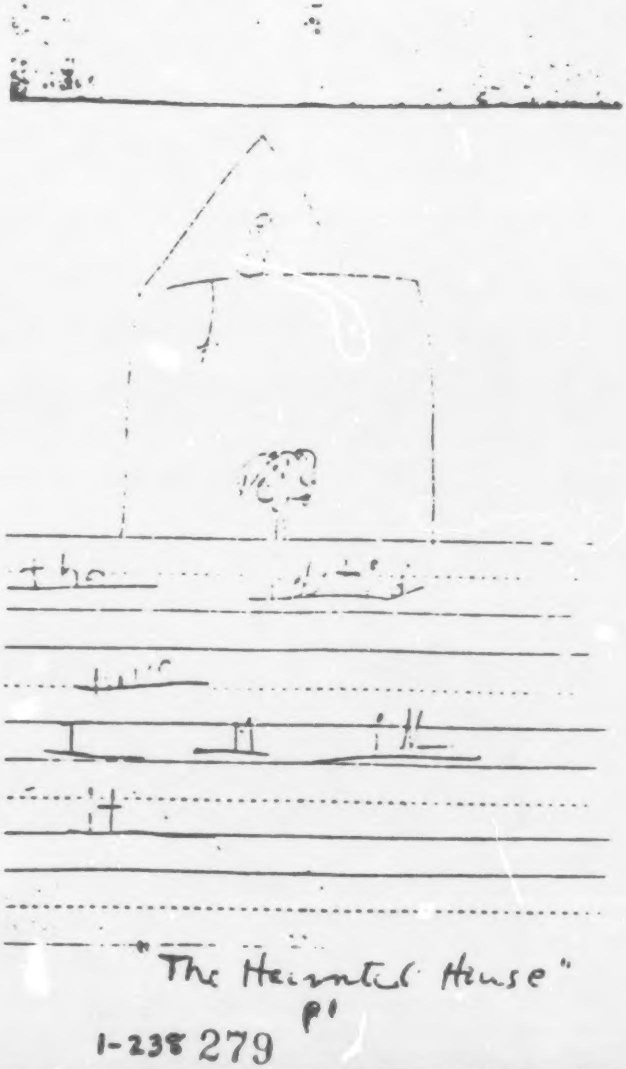
Text Analysis - Natascha - Appendix B


D HI EN D
BDt ER AE

"Dog" p1



"The Haunted House" p1

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Text Analyses - Natascha - Appendix B

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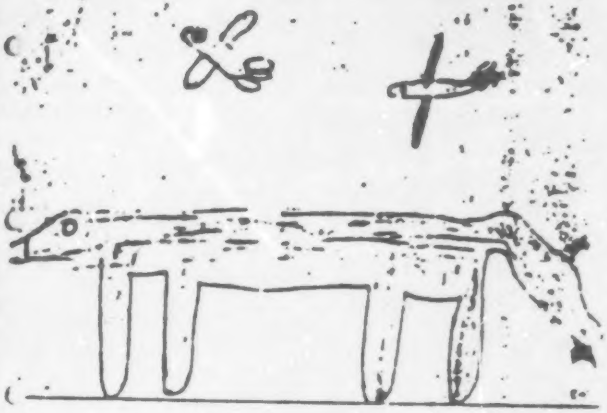

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" Baby Puppies And the Birds "
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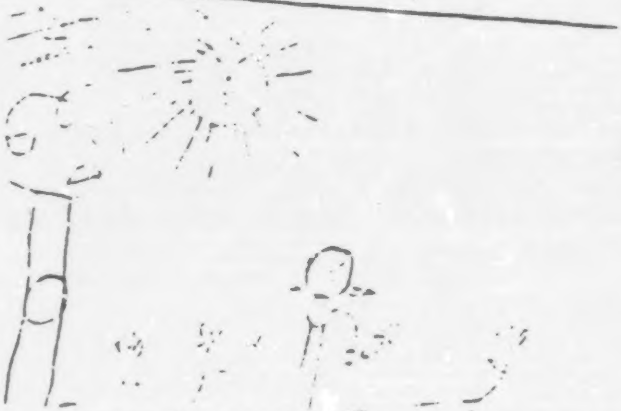
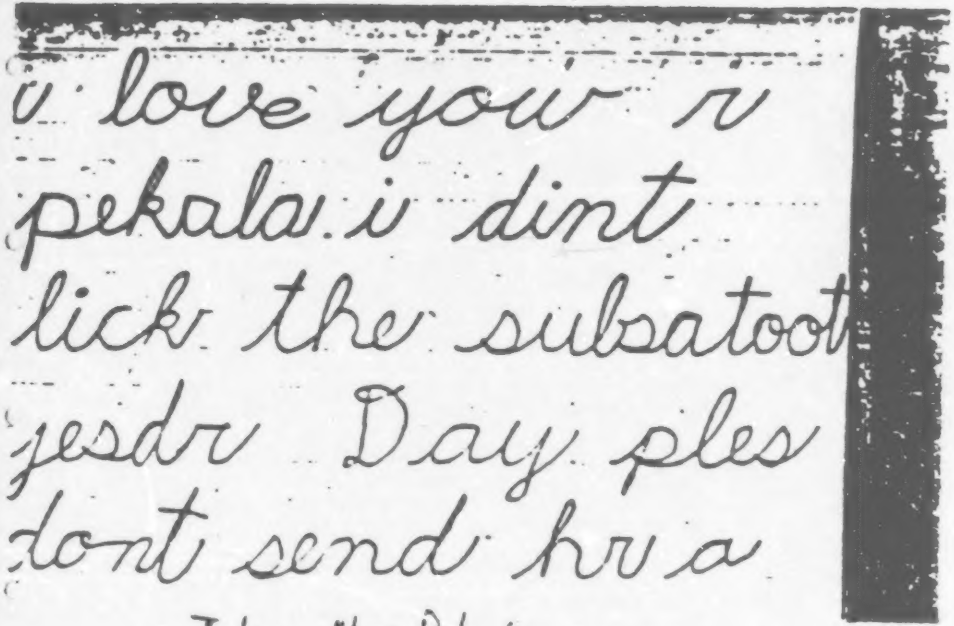


I AM IN MY GARDEN!
I PICK FLOWERS!
It's FUN!
I LIKE It

Text Analyses - Natascha - Appendix B



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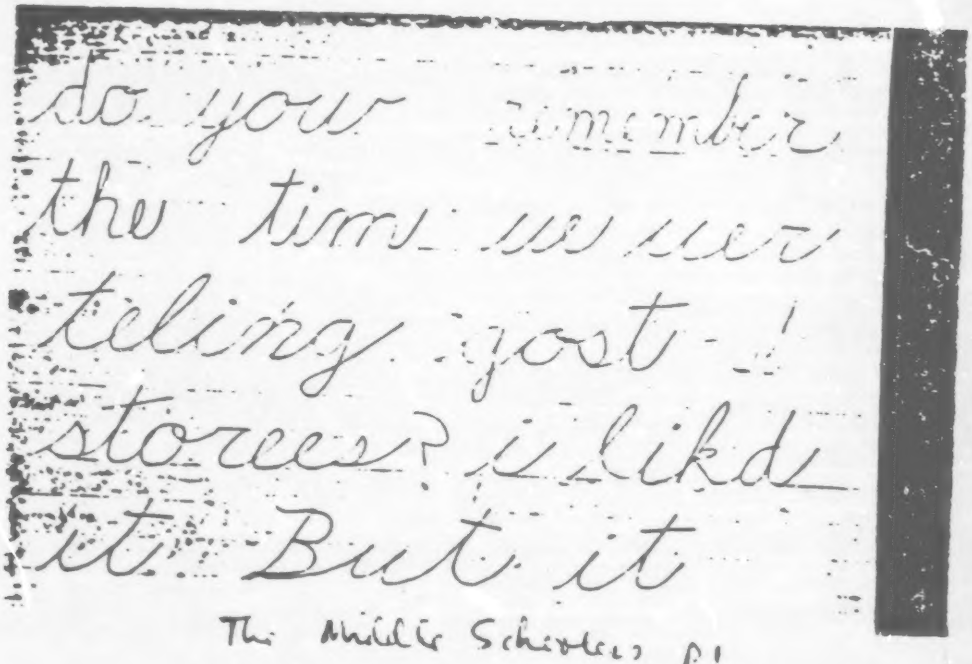
I love Mrs. Pekala p1



do you remember
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The Middle Schooler p1

1. Without making a big deal of it, Anita includes herself in a community of writers(I get one too, because I'm going to write in the journal too."). She connects with Eric by making "the same mistake" he did in designing the journal cover. She also wrote her name upside down on the outside of the cover, as he had just done.

2. Steps in Writing
1)Write first draft
2)Have a conference with a writing partner
3)Decide how you want to change or add to your first draft
4)Write a second draft
5)Confer with a writing partner and check for capitalization, punctuation, and spelling
6)Meet with Mrs. Graves
7)Write your final draft

THINKING ALOUD MEMO #2 December 8 4th Grade-Anita Graves

How do you handle an ethnographic itch-one that is just out of reach?

If the metaphor I employed in launching Reba's memo can be recalled I'd like to build on it as a way of understanding some of the similar shifts occurring in observing Anita's class. Here too was the ethnographic itch, the bothersome dilemma of successfully "casting the wide net", only to discover that we were not capturing the needed detail of students' writing processes. At about the same time that the Columbia Space Shuttle was blasting off in Reba's class, Anita was recognizing the need for subtle shifts in the pitch and yaw of her students' composition course.

By the first week of November, she noted that some kids were "sharing just to share" rereading the same pieces, while a few others still had not shared. The problem was to "get those regular sharers to reduce quantity and improve quality". Revision was gently introduced on Days 26 and 27 when John and Christine reported back changes in their stories suggested by their audience the previous day. Anita: "Yesterday we told a couple of people how they could improve their stories--as part of sharing". John is asked to read his piece on Hawaii and ape-killing, with changes, and Anita asks those who made suggestions if they "notice any differences?" Most agree it's "faster-paced", "has more action in it" and "an improvement" nods Richie. Anita concurs, "It's much clearer now". When Christine starts to read hers, John reminds her right away of some needed correction, and she reminds him, "This is just a rough draft." As she continues, she does insert one of his on-the-spot suggestions, but a couple of other kids aren't so gentle with their interruptions. Anita and I wonder how to handle criticism and revision in subsequent sharing groups.

Other adjustments are to come, but I think it is useful to imagine Anita operating as a benevolent ground control to her fourth graders and for us to watch what happens as the following chronology unfolds.

Day 40

Students have been working on dialogues and a few in pairs or trios are on their third dialogue.

Characters include:

Pen and Pencil (Sharon)
George, a Hyena and Harriet, a Bobcat (Matt)
Clock and Watch (Amy Beth)
Abbott & Costello (Mike, Jeff, Rich & Eric)
Jeckle & Heckle (Maureen & Janine)
Cat and Mouse (Amy K.)

Tom, starting his 3rd, describes them:

1st story: "Army man & Jap." "took place in a Japanese fort--
any war".

2nd story: "house and a fly in a stable"

3rd story: Mr. and Mrs. Silly ("young people having an argument")

Christine's three are:

1st story: Vinnie & Cindy-"people in a house in New York"

2nd story: Rachel & Sammy-"people in Westhampton arguing...how
much it costs for pizza and cigarettes".

3rd story: "Danny & Sandy in Grease"

Anita observes how much they "love to do this with a partner" though she has not restricted how they group, if at all. I mention my interest in wanting to focus on individual students and we consider Eric and others as likely.

Day 42

A typical schedule is up on the board:

12:45- 1:00-Journals
1:00- 1:30-Publications
1:30- 1:45-Sharing

Kids are comfortably overlapping kinds of writing, asking permission for using one another's names in stories and swapping ideas. Anita moves about asking "where are you in your publication piece?" with the goal being to "get something in the book from each one of you." Eric and I plop on the rug and go over the P.A. announcement he is preparing to read on class's UNICEF cookie sale that afternoon. It needs lots of help so instead of playing the editorial heavy, I call Richie over to act as "another reader." I'm aware that Eric is not really judging his work and say, "Richie is a good guy". Eric begins "See if you think this will sell cookies for us?". He reads and Richie comments "Tell them what kind of cookies--" "--Chinese almond cookies".

We discuss other changes, check the size of the just-baked cookie, decide on prices, and Richie rewrites it for Eric. A first draft. They read it to Kenny and he adds more changes, "Where are you?" and they go back to word choices--the rhetoric of selling cookies: "fresh baked-get 'em while they're hot...today's the last day!" They grow excited over the best strategy for selling the "giant" cookie--"There is one giant cookie for 50¢". We arrow and edit and discuss how they'll physically get cookies around school. Conscious now of audience we supply appropriate information for those hearing the announcement. Richie is a big help and a good "fast writer" admits Eric.

Day 48

I follow up on Eric and ask how the announcement went. "It was scary." "How come?" Eric: "Well, because the whole school was listening"—he asks me to reread what I've just recorded and chuckles. I ask for a copy and he checks with Richie and says "it's thrown away."

He's also lost his piece for publication so we agree to begin a new piece together. We look for an idea:

Eric: "I'm probably going to write about Thanksgiving. Every month I have something special to write..."

4th of July=Revolutionary War
April=Easter
January=New Year's Day
December=my birthday and Christmas
November=Thanksgiving
October=I think of...Halloween
September=I think of
August=I think of vacation.
February=I think of ...what would I think...Washington & Lincoln's Birthday
March=I think of St. Patrick's Day
May=I think of my mother-birthday
June=I think, I think of the soon coming 4th of July

I've got all the things now"--he counts them up--"Well done." I acknowledge. (I continue in some detail because of what happens next. It turns out that Eric is going to South America with his mom and sister in a few days!) "Since I'm not going to be here on the last days of November, I'm not going to write about Thanksgiving...I'm going to be here on December 2nd so I'm going to write about Christmas and my birthday." And then another turn in the search for a topic. I refocus his efforts: "All of a sudden we have lots of possible things to be writing about now." He continues "My mother and sister--trip to South America"--he bolts for the globe and points to Guyana: "My mother has an airline that flies there" (she's a flight attendant). Seeing a far off look in his eyes, I ask "Is there something troubling you?" Twice he repeats "I'm so excited about going to Guyana this Thursday." "Is that what's troubling you? I repeat. Eric: "It's slowing my work down. Lately the only thing I've been thinking about is leaving." His voice has dropped and leveled. "How does that make you feel?" "All of the excitement is making my work not get done-because I'm thinking about it so much." "Anything else you want to add? You OK?" He nods and asks to go over my notes. And it's time to join the group for sharing.

Later I learn Eric's parents are divorced, and in Anita's words, he leads a "yo-yo existence". I wonder what the next day will bring.

DAY 49

Eric comes in from recess with a bloody lip and a headache. Kevin asks him "What's the name of the story?" and Eric answers "The story of my life—just kidding."We review our talk yesterday and he expresses insecurities about the heat, sunburn, etc. When he makes no mention of discovering a topic, I ask general questions on writing.

When you think of writing what comes to mind?

Eric: handwriting, penmanship, journal, publication piece and cowboy book. Art." "Art?" I ask. "Because everytime we go to art we have to write at least one thing--I write things in art--like I have to put my name on the project."

We move to the hall to continue. I ask him to picture himself in the act of writing. His headache is in the way so we both settle to write. I give him my brown folder as a desk for his journal. Over the next five minutes he checks several spellings "Fort? were? furious"=forouse (his way). "What's cooking?" I ask. "A lot" he replies. Says receive and spells it r-e-s-e-a-v-e (now starting p. 11 of journal.)

Splat, Splat!--the fire alarm over our heads sends us scurrying outside to line up with class. Anita motions toward Janine "She's writing again in the fire drill". and says to me "Kevin claims if there were a neutron bomb going off you would be writing about it."

(What I'm writing was what Eric had just said about spelling:

"I just think how to spell. If I can't remember I ask, and I ask, well, uh, I ask someone if they can spell it for me. I say another couple of letters and if I'm right they say "right" and if I'm wrong they spell it for me.")

As we file back in, Tom smiles and says, "Janine couldn't sacrifice her journal", and Eric and I resume our seats in hall. A class comes at us. "A stampede of buffalo!" I say and add, "kids are great" he agrees. He writes away. I ask the topic. "I'm always working on this--Indians." "By choice?" "Yep." Moments later I ask "...How do you feel when I'm writing about you?" "I feel alright. I feel normal. My headache's gone." He's on p. 12 and we agree and sign that if Eric pulls the top of the pen off that is a signal to keep his comments "off the record." It's time to join the class for sharing.

THINKING ALOUD MEMO # 3 ANITA GRAVES - 4th GRADE APRIL 1982

As I work through the 150 pages of fieldnotes on Anita's class since 12/1/81, I'm overwhelmed by how much is here to see and, moreover, by how much is here that we may not yet see. Shaping this memo is done in the spirit of that dilemma, for I sense that much of what we will discover is embedded in layers of information we are presently, perhaps, too close to in both time and perspective to discern.

Nevertheless, certain patterns and themes are emerging and it is to these that I would like to attend. Since Day 52 (12/1) I have observed Anita's class 30 times (including two full days), interviewed a half dozen students individually outside of class, fussed with video equipment to record kids' writing processes, and joined Anita Graves in an extended conference with her case study's mother (audio taped 3/25). Therefore, data include fieldnotes, journal entries, audio and video tapes of kids' composing, and interviews. Out of these sources I've construed a number of themes and observations. In this memo I will focus on a handful of them: Anita as a student-centered teacher, kids and their ideas on writing, sharing time and publishing, and writing process approaches in math and science activities.

"THE CHILDREN LEAD THE TEACHER FOLLOWS" (DONALD GRAVES) [1]

Describing herself as a "student-centered teacher", Anita quotes her namesake above in an early December journal entry, and adds "It's much better to take the cues from the children." This theme is borne out days later during sharing time (Day 56). Jeff had just read his football story "Giants & Bears" and a few students direct their responses on it to Anita, not to him. Knowing this was only his second time of sharing and catching his sense of being left out of the feedback process, Anita quietly sat down with the kids on the steps and let Jeff field the questions. Naturally the comments shifted from he's to her, to you's to him and they addressed author not authority-figure. Anita complimented him with a big smile. "Sounds like they liked a lot of things you wrote, Jeff." Two days later Jeff was up and sharing again. Later she noted in her journal: "It seemed the right thing to do. I often follow these impulses without thinking much about it." That recalls for me the philosophical advice attributed to Yogi Berra for successful baseball hitting: "There ain't nobody that can hit and think at the same time".

On another occasion when the class had accumulated too many demerits for acting up in art class Anita acknowledges and adjusts the schedule to fit the idea Cindy volunteers . She had suggested that writing time came just before art time instead of sharing time, "so we won't be so wild." The kids would enjoy hearing one another's pieces so much that they would move, rather keyed up, into whatever activity was next. Cindy's calming strategy worked as the class quietly lined up to leave for art at 2:25.

What we have here is a teacher who describes herself as a "practical realist" responding and respecting the needs of her students. These mid-flight adjustments are indicative of her interest in what makes a class work, not who. When modeling good reading and writing habits (as her oral readings or journal writings do it is both for them and from them .) It comes out of a conviction of what's right and what works. As a student-centered teacher she has a deep appreciation and respect for the goods that come her way courtesy of her students and provides for easy commerce in the give and take of classroom management and learning.

KIDS WITH WRITING: SHARING TIME

Most kids love sharing time. They check the schedule on the board, eye the clock and gallop over to the steps ready to participate. Now and then a couple will straggle over, still caught up in their writing or in some need not to join the group that day. Usually Anita lets them continue unobtrusively at their desks, within ear-shot but apart. But for most, sharing is the hot ticket in town. Eric or Tom or Kevin will have scurried about earlier fomenting interest and excitement in their respective pieces. Jeff, Cindy or Amy K. will signal in less overt ways their desire to share their writing. They key element in the pattern known as sharing time is performance, of getting up and presenting a piece. There is an air of immediacy, of spontaneity, and of risk which has always distinguished drama from text. Published stories "settle" into the 4-G Book but drafts burst raw and alive day after day, full of the topics of their lives, both home and school.

Sometimes their enthusiasm needs checking and Anita has consequently shifted the uses of sharing time to more appropriately manage it:

> Day 51: "Sharing time needs more structuring and I'm going to try previewing pieces ahead of time... children are scribbling down any old thing in order to have something to share." (AG journal)

> Day 57: "...I think the quality of sharing time has started to improve. I don't feel so much like I'm in the Star Wars barroom scene during sharing time." (AG journal)

Knowing that many kids were writing 1st drafts, sharing, and then going on to start other 1st drafts without following through towards publication brought about this rule change:

> Day 76: "You may write 3 1st drafts but one of these must be taken through the writing steps and then published. The children agreed that this was fair. This was also the time the class stopped sharing so that everyone could concentrate on publishing. It's publish or perish in 4-G!" (AG journal)

John was a good example of why this change was put into effect. Often the first one to share, he seldom took a piece through to publication. Chris, one of his peers, put it simply, "He likes writing and he likes sharing." (Day 71). (Her remark, said in defense of John, came out when Anita had suggested he work on the football piece he had just shared for publication). A couple of days later I got to him curious about what would motivate him to take a piece through to publication. I repeated Chris' remark to check its accuracy and he concurred with her assessment adding that he might, "go all the way with this piece." He appreciated AG's encouragement, offering, "Now I don't feel stuck because of Mrs. Graves." (Is this what he assumed I wanted to hear?)

I'd like to collect kids' perceptions of what "publicating" or "going all the way" with a piece means. Amy perceives publishing as "good" because "you have to fill up the book". What kinds of strokes do they get for publishing and from whom - themselves, their classmates, us? I'd like to learn more about what 4th graders get out of sharing time as well, and I share with Anita the desire to have sharing be a vital part of their composing processes.

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On the Road Again

Sharing time successes have naturally spread to visits with other Wading River classes. At present the Bay Area Caravan has toured 4 classes. On Day 75 I accompanied master of ceremonies Tom H. and a half dozen stars to Mrs. Johnson's 4th grade class. After Tom's opening remarks a selection of published and in-draft pieces were read and a discussion followed.

Q: "How did you get your ideas?"
A: "It comes in our brains, it comes in our brains - we write what we want to."
Eric responds.
Q: "How long did it take you to get your drafts finished and a final copy?"
A: "About a week." John quips matter-of-factly.
Mrs. Johnson's kids said they do "one story a month-until it's done" and kids from both classes batted back and forth writing times and composing habits. The 4-G ones were proud of their work and volunteered this PR notice about writing: "We hate to stop writing. When SSR time comes it's, 'Oh, come on! - we want to keep writing!" We left her class with an invitation to have them come read their pieces for us sometime. Other groupings of 4-G kids have performed for 2nd and 3rd grade classes with similarly encouraging reactions and experiences.

Colonial Diaries

The uses of sharing time grew to include a visit from Di Burkhardt's middle schoolers on Day 94. Anita's kids were beginning a study of the colonial period and the older students came to share their diaries as a way to demonstrate different points of view both in writing and in history. 4th graders were amazed to hear the variety of points of view and to hear 1st hand how many sided a historical truth can be.

KIDS ON WRITING: GETTING IDEAS

We've just looked at how kids handle the performing part of a writing period. I'm not going to focus on ongoing themes of collaboration and of gaining permission to use one another's names in the memo, but will instead focus here on kids' perceptions on writing, on where they get an idea from, and what constitutes a good one.

Television is clearly an idea market for many of the students. I work with Kevin on Day 54. We agree "to write together" - he on "Fall Guys," his piece on the new T.V. series, and me on him. We both like that "write-together" phrase and settle into our respective writings. Along the way I ask, "How do you write?" And Kevin theorizes, "I write whatever pops into my mind. When I see T.V. and it shows wrecks and blow ups I just take 'em and switch 'em and write 'em down a little and use 'em in my story... here comes a funny part. I got it already in my head." Back to writing: "He was drinking Jack Daniels booze and got drunk and flipped over in your truck." Richie (Day 103) also works on a T.V.-inspired story called "Strike Force." He announces "Saturday I wrote 20 pp." and tells me he is going for a 57 pp. story - which would beat the 5-G class record for last year. (This later rings a bell and I recall on Day 51 Richie's interest in writing many pages on Chinese family customs. Length is a real issue for him in attaining writing stardom. He also wants to compete for "the $20 or something like that, that Tom won last year" for a story). I asked Richie, "What makes a good story?" He quickly responds, "putting expression in it... if you say in Jaws 'this big giant shark came up'. Or if it bites somebody's leg you could say, 'I could feel the shark's...' That's what Tommy did in "Raiders of the Lost Arc: 'Shiny tentacles wrapping around...'
J.C.: What else?
Richie "Action. Like I said in my story if somebody jumps or a car falls off a bridge or shots... You could read this (handing me his 20 pp. draft) if you want." I nod so

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and continue, "Where else besides T.V. do your ideas come from? "Books." he promptly replies, naming, "Bugs Bunny, Raggedy Ann and a little book called Mr. Grape.", also adding that the idea for his science report "Beavers" came from a book.

Besides television, movies, and books kids note other sources. John volunteers that he got the idea for one football story from "the fumbling of the kids in playground today." Tom, on another day, develops his sources for ideas, "from books, playing with friends, jokes that you tell - that's where you get ideas for comedies."
J.C.: "Anywhere else?"
Tom: Other people's stories...when you think, 'I got to put that in a story!" Kevin joins us and I pursue Tom with, "which story do you like best in your journal?"
Tom:"Hard to decide. Usually the latest (pause) 'cause I think I can get something out of it, but usually I don't... I could do a real great story but I do what Kevin does - leave it off too short."
J.C.: "How could you fix that?"
Tom: "Just keep on writing... and thinking. (Kevin nods in agreement) got to think hard to get a good story... I re-read it and correct it and stuff to make it better. By the time I finish I got one of the best stories."
J.C.: "Where do you get your ideas from?"
Tom: "Just thinking - getting in different moods everyday.
J.C. "Different moods?"
Tom: (yes nod) I feel I have to write about something - can't discard the idea."
Kevin: Can't discard the idea? (quizzical)
Tom: "Can't just throw it away.
Kevin: Oh.
(Later I ask Tom to define moods for me:
"It's like the different ways you change everyday."
We go on to discuss that we often don't know where our ideas or moods come from and agree to help each other keep track of what we discover about writing.)

The girls too are not immune to the influence of television and movies for story writing ideas. On day 62 Christine and a couple of others write a M.A.S.H. story and buzz about rounding up permission from "boys to be in love with". Cindy on the same day is considering Private Benjamin but can't get going on a good idea for her episode of the T.V. series. She digresses to talk about a story she wrote in the 3rd grade which began from "a fur coat my mom was wearing in the car". But it's clear now she wants to stay with Private Benjamin and come up with an idea...

So family, friends, books, daily events, but especially T.V. and movies supply many of the 4th graders with ideas for their stories. Clearly the litmus test is the popularity of the piece during sharing time. I'm curious about that. Will the act of sharing, with its immediate delivery and feedback, draw more interest than going through the writing steps? I'm curious about whether there is life after publication for a piece in the 4-6 Book. Do students' interest wane once the piece is "finished", packed away in published form? Is the product a token or momento of the process? I'm curious too about what impact the piece has on readers once it is separated from the author's voice. How well that distance influence future pieces for the author? In fine, I'd like to learn more about the balance between the popularity of sharing time and the payoff of publication for kids in 4-6 and how that matches their composing needs.

WRITING AND SCIENCE

As the Science Fair approached (Day 67) the class used sharing time that week to rehearse and get feedback on their science reports. The usual encouraging responses to an author's work (eg. "What phrase struck you as the best? What's one good thing you heard?") which are designed to lead the writer on, took on a pointed significance as they prepared for an audience outside the classroom. Anita set the stage for their

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work, acknowledging that, "this may by the only chance for you to hear each other's reports." Mike reads his on gunpowder and is asked to be sure about his facts on gunpowder - "What powder is it? Are you sure about it?" John says to Mike, "I knew you'd get that comment." Amy stumbles on the word hereditary on her Guinea Pig report and Tom suggests that parts of her report don't really sound like her - "too complicated." Rich and Kevin have the same vocabulary problem on their collaborative 2 pp report titled, "Rockets and Rocket Propellant." Then Anita raises the biggie: "Should you write it down if you don't know it?" Which leads the class into a discussion of the relative value of encyclopedias (Day 84). The following day Cindy advises Christine to, "totally try to change a sentence", to "have it in your own words." Next she intones, "Encyclopedias give information but they don't make it sound good." In addition, Anita features "say back or "tell back" to sharpen kids' listening skills, retentive abilities and accurate retelling. She asks them to "remember as much as they can remember" as kids continue to try out their reports as the Science Fair approaches.

WRITING AND MATH

One of the several benefits of observing full days is to see how writing is integrated in other disciplines. On Days 101 and 103 I observed how a writing process approach was constructive in creating word problems in math. Kids conferenced, helped each other through stuck spots, brainstormed together, or worked in isolation. The task was to produce their "best addition and best subtraction" word problems on 3x5 cards for an audience that "counts" - another 4th grade class. It had to be neat and it had to be correct (question on one side, answers on the other).

According to the schedule on the board it was math time but it sure sounded like writing time. Eric whispers advice to Rich: "Just sit there and try to think of something." Moments later he produces:

"One day we had an M&M clean-up. Mike and I got 7 M&M's each. How many M&M's did we have together?" Kids warn one another, "She's going to give these to Mrs. Flaster - handwriting will have to be perfect!" Mike nervously calls out, "It has to be in the neatest, Mrs. Graves?" Anita doesn't hear that as she conferences with Cindy on her word problem: "You're ahead of things. Save it". (Cindy has done a multiplication problem.) Tom, working by himself, gets:

"Harry wanted to divide 8 oranges into 4 of his friends. How many did each person have?" (That will need help) Cindy completes her addition problem:

"One day I went to the zoo. I saw 2 elephants, 2 ostriches, 1 walrus, 4 snakes, 1 white tiger and an albino lion. How many animals did I see altogether?"

Mike prefaces his reading of his with, "Mine stinks - it's too easy":

"I went to the fair with $2.00. At first I bought a box of popcorn for a $1.00. And then I bought a candy bar for .49¢. How many cents do I have left?"

Kids argue over the correct answer to Christine's:

"I filled 4 qts. of water in a pot. 1½ qts. evaporated. How much did I have left?"

What was taken for granted here was a process approach to solving a problem. The students simply grafted what worked in writing: drafts, conferences, rehearsals, awareness of audience and individual composing styles, etc., to complete the task. Anita observed it similarly: "After attending a math workshop, I started doing the sensible, logical thing--having them write their own word problems. They naturally fell into the pattern of writing 1st drafts, reading them to a partner to see if they made sense and editing their final copies." (AG journal)

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TO BE CONSIDERED

There are other themes and ideas shaping and awaiting further study as we pass Day 120 of this 1st year: The nature and extent of collaboration for kids during writing time; the continued issue of gaining permission to use classmates' names for story characters; conferencing between peers, and with Anita; the kinds and qualities of student writing; and closer looks at kids' composing processes. Recently in the study group a growing interest has been our collaborative explorations in the connections between literature and writing. Within the last month Anita and I have decided to introduce additional stories, tales and poems at the start of the afternoon writing period. Besides knowing oral readings have a calming effect on kids in from recess, we are curious what effect carefully selected samples would have on their own writing. Will these juxtapositions flavor their own choices in genre, topic or form? What kinds of connections will they make between reading and writing?

Bound up with this interest in literature and writing is the second and related theme - that of the growing partnership Anita and I share in 4-G. We both felt right in my reading to the class as they flew in from the playground. I could set aside my notebook and actually participate in the class - in fact, having Kevin or Kenny take fieldnotes while I participated. Anita's journal entry of Feb. 27th put it this way:

"I realized I feel different having Jamie in the room now from the way I did at first. At the beginning he was an observer and I sometimes felt obliged to make things entertaining, or at least "not boring" for him... Now I feel more like I did when I was team teaching. It's more of a joint effort with both of us participating actively... It reminds me of something Diane Burkhardt said once, "Next year is going to feel awfully lonely'. We won't have anyone around who we can talk to about our kids and who understands what we are trying to do."

As a fledgling ethnographer, I began as an observer, sensitive to capture all that I could without intervening - knowing I was woefully myopic. What right did I have to butt in when the last elementary classrooms I had been in were my own in the 50's? But the 4-G kids have ways of winning you over, and by December I felt a little surer about what was going on.

The real privilege is to accept the partnership of a dedicated teacher committed to her class. I'm grateful to observe and participate and recognize that in many ways we have only just begun to learn from the kids of 4-G. So these and other themes discussed above as well as those still embedded in what we already "know" suggest much more fruitful tillage.

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THINKING ALOUD MEMO #1 October 21, 1981 4th/5th Grade Bill Silver

What have I learned about this class, this teacher, so far?
What works for the people in this room?

This is a mixed class of 4th and 5th graders, seven of whom were in Bill's class last year. He and Harvey Heilbrun team teach their classes, with Bill handling the writing for both groups this year and Harvey the social studies. To simplify things, Bill and I agreed I would observe only his 21 students, even though he would be teaching the same things to Harvey's kids.

The classroom is divided in half by lockers with a rug area on one side, and work tables and a few desks on the window side. There is a small area used for student-teacher conferences set up next to Bill's desk and filing cabinets and storage areas sprinkled about the room-- a room which is designed to offer lots of choices to suit individual and small group preferences for work and study. During writing time kids are comfortable lying on the rug, sitting on or at tables, sinks, and even one composer in an "Oscar" barrel!

In the ten observations so far this class has done free writings, memory chains, mapping activities related their social studies time-lines, and process exercises. This is a class committed to a process approach to composition. At each step, writing and talking attends to the process of composing. Time is taken to pay attention to the hows of writing. Students are advised to write through stuck points and discuss the nature of them. After a first draft of their memory story, and of other writing episodes, numerous questions and commentary centered on how they found the writing, the doing of it.

Writing was discussed as a series of back and forth steps including pre-writing, 1st drafts, rewriting and revising, conferencing, and editing. Mapping was seen as a kind of rough drafting ,"a place to make notes...a place to carry around ideas for a while...to get you started." Talk mattered. The dialogues on recalling previous years of schooling gener ated details and lots of lively verbal flashbacks. The teacher supported their search and their questions. Students took walking tours through school to refresh their memories, after Bill had modeled his years teaching at Miller Ave. Friends met to goad one another further and deeper into earlier school memories. Rereading was emphasized to retrieve ammunition for their memory stories for Ma and Pa to read on Parent's Night.

What was clear too was what constituted a good story: A story was good if the writer was satisfied and the reader interested. The atmosphere and attitude for producing such writing is clearly a criterion for making writing work in this class.

THINKING ALOUD MEMO #2 February 18 Bill Silver

MAJOR EVENTS

Halloween Stories

After a couple free writing activities on Halloween as the topic, a brainstorming session filled the board with lists of Halloween words and phrases. Next step, a first draft, was due on October 27. With that, students paired and looked for three things in their drafts: sufficient information, proper sequencing, and specifics. Stories were shared on the Friday before the big day and final copies were due 11/6 (Day 39).

Writing Cycle Idea

The main event of the five weeks before the Christmas holidays was introduced on 11/10. Lots and lots of writing anticipated a final piece which would be due on December 23. Two long, student-generated writing / sharing free-for-alls (on Days 52, 53) culminated in the following schedule to meet this goal:

12/4: 2 drafts or pieces

12/11: 3 drafts or pieces

week of 12/14: move toward Publishing

12/23: Final deadline.

On Day 53 Bill acknowledges, "An awful lot going on that was really nice yesterday . . . 3 or 4 students shared pieces with me. At least four different groups sharing stories with each other. Hope that was useful — don't know how it got going. Lot of people just sitting and writing -- let's go for two in a row today . . . ." To enhance this environment Bill reintroduced challenge cards and "gallery of words" materials as starting suggestions for writers "if you get stuck." He encouraged lots of writing, stressing, "All of you ought to be writing at home every night . . . 5, 10, 15 minutes . . . some kind of free writing or working on a story every night." This enthusiasm carried over into that day's journal entry (12/7) where Bill notes the purpose of this writing cycle:

"A) to encourage lots of starts and experiments.

B) to discourage them from tearing pages they didn't like out of their notebooks, and

C) to show them that not everything need be finished; even good things can wait."

As kids wrote they classified themselves into one of three groups depending on the kinds of drafting patterns they fell into:

Type A = (1st draft → revise, 2nd draft → edit)

Type B = (1st draft/1st draft/1st draft)

Type C = (junk/1st draft)

There were four A's, 3 or 4 C's and all the rest were B's. Interestingly, Bill notes, "most had hooked into one piece they intended to start revising." He was quite pleased with the efforts some kinds put into revising. He wonders, "I really think in the long run the 'best' writing comes from themselves -- their topics, their ideas and forms -- not from provision I make. Yet they also need to explore forms. Anyway . . . " (12/15) As a note of comparison he also observed that the finished publication of his students vs. Harvey's group showed the former to be substantially longer, perhaps due in part to their attention to revision.

Biographical Interviews

This is the first leg of a three part unit. Down the road Part 2 will have students interview members of their families (preferably oldest ones, e.g. grandparents) about where they grew up and their childhood. Part three will be a formal research report on the country or state where their interviewees came from. January's focus, however, has been on Part I. Harvey prepped both groups in December on interview questions and they conduct same on one another. Day 71 finds them pairing and I observe Andrea acknowledge as she works on her draft of Scott, "I didn't give Scott much answers to go on." Moments later he is over to ask her,

> "What hospital were you born in?"

Andrea,

> "I don't know but it was in Hicksville."

Kids check with partners to clarify answers and chatter about their pasts. Jennifer Chan, paired with Bill, runs over to ask what century he was born in. Andrea, running out of time, pumps Scott for more details on his childhood. She learns of the rafts he used to build out of lumber scraps at his summer house on the lake. (Day 71)

Writing groups are introduced the next day, and, armed with worksheets, the students in groups of 3 or 4 record notes on sequence, information, specifics, as well as help the reader/writer focus and trim unnecessary details from the draft. The following day a different group is formed made up of two sets of original interviewer/interviewee pairs and they meet to check accuracy and listen for introduction, sequencing, and conclusion (Day 75). The interviewee's job is to verify the facts while the others listen for the structuring of the piece. Editing, and designing silhouettes of interviewed students were final components in the compilation of class' publication entitled, "Biographies."

Anthology

The work in progress aims to put together a class magazine, containing selections from the four previous major class writings:

Memory Stories (October)
Halloween Stories (November)
Writing Cycle Idea (December)
Biographies (January)

Students opted for three groupings as to how they approached this task:

A) take one of the above four, meet with writing group and revise, edit and polish.
B) find a piece already begun and draft and revise and work it through a writing group.
c) Start a new piece.

Deadlines were then set with drafts due and first meeting of writing groups for January 22. The next two weeks were involved with revision group meetings. As some students continued, others, who had finished, went on with the free writing exercises. The more talented drawers vied for the cover design. On my last visit (Day 95) Kelli was coloring up the balloons idea selected by the class as best cover design. Krishna got the honors on the back cover and Shannon will work on her rainbow design for the Table of Contents.

At present, Bill is completing the typing of the last of the students' papers and soon will xerox thirty-five copies or so for members of the class, other interested parties, including librarians, other teachers, the principal and this resident ethnographer.

Reflections on Teaching

or

"Implicit Classroom" Statements

Key "the IMPLICIT CLASSROOM" Diane Burkhardt

11/2/81

The kids I teach are in the throes of adolescent turmoil. English (or any other subject) is just about the least important part of their lives. How can 'academics' have any meaning when your best friend just showed the very private and personal note you wrote her to the three people she was sitting next to in the assembly or when you aren't sure who you are going to be rooming with on the Boston field trip. Most of my unhappy moments about teaching come when I lose sight of this and when the academic curriculum becomes the center of what I'm doing. Therefore, my primary curriculum is not the teaching of English, but the building of relationships with the kids I teach. This is basic to everything else I do. My classroom becomes a home we share for 180 days and English provides us with lots of shared experiences upon which to build.

Relationship-building is a two-way street. If I'm to get to know my students, they must also get to know me. ~~It's hard for me to hide myself from them~~ If I'm to have an impact on their lives, I can't be distant or removed. So, part of my curriculum is being very open and honest with them. In fact it often occurs to me that I find it much easier to reveal my human frailties to my students than to my friends. By trusting them and risking on a personal level, I'm teaching them that these are the keys to meaningful relationships.

As I begin to know each student at the beginning of the year, I try to look beyond his words and actions to a self which exists within. It's that true self which I often talk with or write to. I encourage each one to discover that self along with me and I like being part of the search. With some kids each year this becomes more overt than with others, but it is implicit with each. Since most of the kids don't know who they are from one day to the next and feel very insecure about themselves, I think it's important to reflect to them the person that I see/feel within.

The growth of individual relationships has an impact on the group rapport. Although I always want to feel that my classroom is relaxed and comfortable, I know that it doesn't start out being as comfortable as it will be once we all know one another and stop hiding things from each other or stop playing teacher/student games.

I like to laugh and joke and have fun in all the things we share together, but basically I'm very serious about what I do. I think that one of the ways I can best show that I care about my students is to take them, the work they do and the time we spend together very seriously. I put a lot of thought into planning what we do in class. This may seem to contradict my initial statements about the relative unimportance of English, but not really. It's important to me that everything be planned well and that it fits into a total picture. It's OK that it's important to me as long as I understand that it isn't the main thing in their lives. It's merely the 'stuff' we do to give us a wide variety of experiences to learn about ourselves and each other. Working hard, putting in a lot of time, organizing things well, being on top of things--all this shows the kids that I care. It's also the source of much of my energy because I don't lose sight of individual kids while I do what I do. And the more I stay in touch with the kids, the more energy I have to do even more.

Perhaps it's time now to focus more specifically on writing and the teaching of writing. Very often I feel quite lucky to be teaching writing because it lends itself so well to accomplishing my main goals in teaching. Sharing writing with each other enables us to know one another so much more deeply.

I always knew the power of communicating through writing -- for years I have frequently written notes to my students - and they have written back. But ever since I began to be a writer in the classroom along with my students and since we began to discuss our writing together I have felt much more like the partner-in-learning that I've wanted to be.

So far this year we have focused exclusively on writing in English class. The kids have written several revisions of the pieces they are preparing for publication. We've worked a lot on process journals and how to use a process entry to explore and discover facets of the composing process. Writing groups have met almost weekly. I've given specific feedback to individuals and groups about their writing group participation. I have lots of opportunities to chat informally with kids about their pieces.

I think the fact that we've devoted so much time to writing shows them its importance to me, and I think their natural response to this will be to make it more important in their own lives.

I wanted to go through the complete process from first draft to editing and publication so that the kids will know I'm for real -- that I will do what I say I will do whether it's responding to process entries, listening to tapes, or publishing a class magazine.

I believe that all kids want to succeed, want to do things as well as they can. If they aren't succeeding right now, it's my job to help them understand better what itis that they have to do.

I can always tell how things are working by how I feel inside. Each year is a different year because the individuals are unique, and painful as it may be, I must build the relationships each year. But the rewards come as trust and rapport increase. Things are beginning to work now and I know it will only get better. I hope that if the day ever comes when I don't see and feel that teaching is loving, that I will have the good sense to pack up my chalk and leave.

REFLECTIONS ON TEACHING, by Ross Burkhardt 11//2/81

I have been asked by Sondra to enumerate and explain my "implicit theories about students, teaching, and writing, about what works in my class, about what students do." To attempt to sum up in a couple of pages the hard earned knowledge and experience of some twenty years in the classroom is not easy. But here goes.

Middle School students have specific needs that a teacher and a classroom environment should respond to. Kids need leadership -- often they want to do things or want to participate but they need to be nudged into it. In the "doing" they discover enjoyment, fulfillment, and the joy of participation and accomplishment. But often kids this age will hang back and wait. Thus the need for leadership, encouragement, and a press gang mentality, at times, on the part of the teacher.

Kids (herinafter meaning 8th graders at SWRMS, the group with which I have been most closely associated during the past nine years) will go with almost anything; they are "receptive" to ideas that are presented intelligently and with some degree of rationality. They want "organization" and an "organized" classroom; by this they most frequently mean that the teacher gives clear directions, that promises are kept, that things happen as planned, and that fiascos don't occur with every project or task. Kids need a model, an example. someone to show the way, to point out how things can/ought to be done. It (the model) does not guarantee they will follow the example, but they do like having a model.

Kids like doing, producing, making. Projects that have a hands-on orientation tend to be successful because they get mind-body working together and call for total involvement.

Kids like to explore and burn out fast on many things. Kids do not like being singled out or being different or treated differently from others. Kids have a strong sense of fairness and justice ("That's not fair," they will say) and yet at the same time will give a substitute hell (which isn't fair). Kids are very inconsistent, since they are exploring roles as to who they are.

Kids love to try on roles, be it in changing their names (spelling Debbie as Debi, Debye, Debby, or Debbi), wearing costumes, etc.

They have some needs that need attention, like public speaking, speaking comfortably in front of a crowd, expressing their ideas, focussing on themselves. They are idealistic and need activies that draw upon that idealism.

Teaching is fun. It is renewing and invigorating. It allows me to be creative, to respond with all my senses to the shifting tides of emotion and commitment running through every class and group of kids. Content is, in many ways, irrelevant to kids and to me. The process of shaping ideas and activities is much more rewarding and demanding and involving than a specific content. And since there is so much to learn, whatever curriculum is selected is selected at the exclusion of several other equally as important or as worthwhile topics, so I see content as second to process and methodology.The challenge of teaching is important to me -- what new risks can I take, what new frontiers need to be explored, what haven't I done. I do not like to repeat myself, and I like to develop new ideas and new approaches. I also like refining certain tasks to get them "just right," if even there is a "just right."

I believe in order and respect for others, and that I am the educational leader in the classroom. My twenty years has not been for naught -- I know many things about kids and learning and teaching, and thus I am running the show. This does not mean that I should be or am arbitrary or dictatorial -- I do try to listen and stay with my students. But there are times when what I do is important to me in the overall (every kid learning "The New Colossus" before going to Ellis Island) that I allow no individuality. On the other hand, there are many times when I am willing to accept alternative approaches to things and alternative responses because they meet with the needs of the kid at that specific moment.

I believe there is a time for structure and a time for relaxing, and that a good classroom has both, and that a creative tension ought to exist in the room that spurs kids to explore things. I believe in changing the furniture, the pace, the approach, etc. Variety rather than routine. And yet, I believe that certain routines are valuable because kids need the security of knowing the expectations. And so I try to weave variations off the theme (as with Memorization #4, in which the task is the same but a new wrinkle has been added -- they go out and find their poems themselves).

Writing is very important to me, in part because I feel I actually know how to teach it and also because it is tied in with so many other goals and activities that I have in my head. In the past two years I have revised considerably my approach to the teaching of writing. I use the Bay Area model of rehearse,draft, revise, edit, and publish. I want kids to pay attention to audience, purpose, and topic. I wrote a "What I Now Believe About the Teaching of Writing" paper this past January which explores these ideas more fully. I believe the teacher should serve as a model for kids in terms of writing (as well as in terms of many other things). I believe kids have things to say, and that they need outlets through which to say them. Expressive writing is very important for this age level kid, and they need to express themselves in journals (process, BUMP, etc.) to get in touch with their feelings. I believe transactional writing for most kids is the hardest/most distant kind of writing from them and their experiences, and thus I do not have kids do as much of it as I have them do expressive or poetic writing. I believe writing needs to be shared, needs an audience, and needs feedback, and so I have set up writing groups to that end. I also believe every kid has a compulsive need to write a "...then I woke up, and it was a dream" piece!

What works in my class? I have recently developed the concept of "grist for the mill," the articulation of a practice of many years standing, one which stems originally from TEACHING AS A SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITY. Neil Postman wrote of the judo-Christian ethic, taking whatever comes your way and pulling it towards and past you and incorporating it into the stream of things rather than throwing up the invisible gardol shield to ward off and repel outrageous comments, new ideas, suggestions, events, happenings, etc. And so I try to take anything that occurs and weave it into a tapestry of events for the kids, some~~thing~~times via slides, sometimes via poems, sometimes via acknowledgement in class of something. Go with the flow? Perhaps, but perhaps more accurately, recognize the flow, and be aware of it and how to rechannel it before it gets too far afield. I try to connect a lot of things so that one event is seen as part of the whole, as impacting on the rest of the events. I try to be myself. If I am happy, it shows. If I am angry, it shows, and I express it. I try to commemorate things that occur and lift them from humdrum reality to exalted status as "an event", and thus give meaning and memory to the lives of my students. I try to be funny, because I believe that when you laugh, you relax, and when you relax, you are more "into" receiving whatever is being sent out.

I try to respond fully to questions (except in those cases where telling the answer will spoil the upcoming activity or experience). Kids need and want and deserve answers, and I like to be up front about things.I try to explain why things are as they are, and I try to keep kids informed about me, about the school, about life. If you feed information in, later on kids get less confused because they are already in touch with some of the background needed to understand certain events.

I try to validate kids and what they do. I try to make them smile. I try to laugh and let kids know that I care about them in all kinds of ways.

Why do I do all this? Because I had good teachers when I was a kid. Because life is more fun when I am happily tired after pulling off a biggie. Because kids need memories. Because I am still a kid in many ways. Becuase I try to think of how I would have liked it were I still a kid, and then try to do it that way if it seems to fit. Because it is my job and I get paid good money for it. Because Diane serves as a model for me. Because I want to leave footprints on the sands of time, and affecting positively the lives of kids is one way to do that.

In other words -- why do I do what I do?

My first succinct answer is, "for selfish reasons," and I have a gripping desire to leave it at that. Honestly, it is a beautiful afternoon and so many other facets of my life beckon. I'm tempted to direct you to Moffet, Macrorie, Elbow, Murray, Brown, etc.,etc., whose theories are well known and whose theories I agree with. All right, I suppose I must plummet, once again, into an explanation of motives and instincts, but I hate going back and repeating my, by now worn out, platitudes. That means of course, that I must then go forward and try to look again, more closely and perhaps discover or clarify what I feel about what I do. So here goes..."Once more with feeling." (Could this all be a wind up for a strike out?)

Try to ignore the crisp sunny afternoon...just try

My theories

About students:

Students learn, not by being taught but by discovering, by appropriating and by assimilating experience.

Students learn best when given the opportunity to work with fellow learners in a group or with at least one other.

Students learn best when in a comfortable accepting environment that nurtures self worth, where defensiveness is unnecessary, and where questioning is more important than answering. ("We have the answers, all the answers; it is the question that we do not have." A. MacLeish)

About teaching:

I'm having a little difficulty with the word teach. I reject Webster's #1.a. definition, "to cause to know a subject." Heaven only knows what my behavior may cause my students to know. If I think of myself as a teacher it is only to the extent that I hold responsibility for arrangihg & presenting ingredients which I hope will result in learning for my students and for myself. I hope that students learn as a result of what they experience in my classroom, but I don't teach; I learn with them.

About Writing:

I think that you learn to write by learning about your writing and so I believe that if a writer can count on accurate, honest, human feedback, with all the contradictions that will arise in any group of responders, that the writer will, often enough, write the very best he/she can. Inevitably the fear that chokes the writer, that fear that she/he will be unable to do it right, will disappear. Eventually the writer will come to trust his/her ability to convey ideas in writing.

This means then that my job is to work at setting up a trusting climate that allows people to help one another, to share without fear of humiliation as writers and to feel safe responding to a writer honestly. This means that the response ought to be descriptive and not evaluative. It should describe what goes on inside the listener or reader as he/she hears the writer's words. I want my students to acquire a sense of freedom, a sense of fluency, and a sense of discipline so that they can feel the joy that comes from communicating meaning accurately to others. Once this happpens, I believe they'll keep on writing.

Response from a skilled group is a basic ingredient for improving writing in school, and so the training of that group is a number one priority. Writers seem to have to progress through a series of steps, although some seem to take the steps in one bounding leap and others don't move from step one. The well known steps for responding are really a series of accomplishments. First a student must learn to listen actively and this is no small step for some who are not used to listening or being listened to. But it is the basic step . Then as a responder he/she must begin to consciously note his/her reaction to the words and then the next step is to be able to dwscribe that reaction.

Sometimes it seems there is no progress and at those times I have to remind myself that just because the students are not taking the step _I_ want them to take, it doesn't mean that they're turning te turnips. So I look again and remind myself that even if they haven't reached step one; if they only are responsible enough to get a piece of writing to the writing group, at least there I always see an eagerness to share that writing. If I don't see "active listening," "sayback," etc. at least I see some lively communication. They are having discussions, hearing points of view they might never have thought of themselves, striking familiar chords, finding they share things they tnought were seceetly theirs alone, learning and making connections with others.

But In the end teaching is a kind of balancing act between creating freedom and applying constraints. I want students to have the freedom to begin to act on their own motivation, but if they don't, I begin to feel the pressure of "the material to be covered" even though at least half of the time I want to say, "but if we don't linger here, how will we discover what material is necessary to cover."

Well there I've done it, gone right to the platitudes, lest some one misconstrue my selfish stance.

REBA PEKALA

REFLECTIONS ON TEACHING FIRST GRADE WRITING

Writing is a form of communication. If the students in my class can begin to communicate their ideas and feel free to express these ideas in writing, they have started on a path toward becoming an individual with a sense of self-worth.

Students can early experience the joy of writing. Joy is quickly sparked when the children become authors of their own published books. Dashes, lines, and inventive spelling are some devices used to free the children from the "I CAN'TS" of writing.

The students chose their own topics---fact or fiction. Usually little or no prodding is necessary. They proceed to write four rough draft stories, drawing pictures to illustrate their meanings. If the student is unable to write the sound/symbol that he wants, he may use dashes or lines to represent his words. At the beginning of first grade some students find it difficult to even write one or two sound/symbols, thus they will use lines, or simply dictate their words to correspond with their drawings.

As a child writes more, learns more sound/symbol relationships, grammar, and punctuation he/she will attempt to use them in his/her writing. Actually being able to "take a chance" on using new writing techniques, or tools, sparks a child's eagerness to try to even better express his thoughts on paper. To me, this is an important step in a child's writing development. The student finds that he/she has command of his own words, and will try new ways of expressing his meaning.

At conference time (when a child has finished four rough draft stories) he/she will chose one which he/she would like to publish. In a separate GOALS BOOK I write the date and title of the chosen rough draft story. Also I include a good remark about the piece of writing. We proceeed to read the story together, revising as we go. At the conclusion of our revision process, we decide on a new goal for the child's next set of rough draft stories. This is written in the child's GOALS BOOK.

The revised draft is typed and returned to the child. The child draws the corresponding pictures, reading the correctly typed version of his/her story. Next the story is bound, and once again returned to the child for re-reading before he/she shares it with our class. After it is shared with the other students, the book is taken home to be read to relatives and friends. The child then returns the book to our classroom bookshelf where his/her classmates may check it out. Thus this one book has been read many, many times.

The pattern of writing four rough draft stories, publishing one of these, taking it home, returning it to school, and sharing it for the remainder of the year is a reoccuring process for the students in first grade.

Revision becomes easier as the child realizes that he/she has power over his words. Great strides will occur in some student writing, while other writers will not experience that total command of words. For these children, their individual maturity and development has not progressed to that point. Children can not be forced to write at plateaus higher than their own developmental time table.

By allowing the children to write frequently, by putting very little academic pressure on their writing skills, and by trying to be non-judgemental of their chosen topics, writing will develop for each child, at a faster rate than when the children use traditional methods of grammar exercises.

The final aide in freeing children's fears of writing is the use of a rough draft stamp. By stamping their booklets with this phrase, "Rough Draft", they no longer have a fear of criticism from their parents, teachers, or even each other. To them this stamp says, "it's o.k. to write, draw, color, crossout anything they want in their own stories." Later, after the story has taken shape, they'll fix it, and polish it, and be very proud to own it!

By using these techniques, by being very patient, by gently guiding a child's development, the children will experience many rewards of good writing within their own learning time frames.

Reba Pekala
First Grade Teacher
Miller Avenue Elem.

ROUGH-DRAFT

A RAMBLING REFLECTION ON TEACHING

Anita Graves

Two things which I was aware of as a child in school have invluenced the way I teach. The first thing was inconsistancy; teachers who were hot and cold and you never knew where you stood. You never knew exactly what was expected of you and it was a worry. The second thing was promises or plans which got kids excited and then never materialized. I resolved to be as consistant as possible and to let children know in concrete terms what I expected of them and to promise nothing which I could not keep.

I try to explain things to children concisely and as briefly as possible. I think often teachers talk too much. I don't want to bore my students because then you've lost them. On the other hand I encourage children to come up to me if they don't understand something. I compliment them for asking questions. I tell them my job is to help them to understand. I was shy as a child and afraid to ask- I know how not understanding one thing snowballs into massive misunderstandings and downright misery. As a child begins to gain confidence I say "What do you think you should do here?" If the answer is anywhere near right I praise and clarify and encourage independence.

I was influenced by Hyam Ginot, a psychologist who wrote "Between Parent and Child" and "Between Teacher and Child." He recognized the importance of expressing back to a child his emotions. "You feel very angry and upset because Suzie took your paper and tore it." Just stating this has an amazing effect in getting a situation sorted out and tempers cooled down.

I found that fooling around with kids, teasing them, and being playful doesn't work for me. It does wonders in other classrooms and there is established a real bond of affection between teacher and student but when I tried it, it just wasn't natural and the kids responded by being wise guys.

I feel its silly to teach certain things at the level we do. Most second and third graders can't understand maps- Many fifth graders don't know the difference between states, cities and countries. Most third graders shouldn't be allowed to use aspostraphies. I have them this year sprinkled like pepper all over every paper. I've already expressed my negative feelings about outlining elsewhere in this journal. I suspect that cognitive level matching may have a beneficial effect on what we teach at various grade levels.

Teaching Head Start and Nursery School made me very aware of how the immediate environment has an influence on children's behavior. An overheated room, the wind, can cause terrible fidgets in 4 year olds. A visiting pet, a new face, a scary T.V. show seen that night could produce extreme excitement. With older children we tend to forget how much impact their home and school surroundings have on them. Four year olds have about a 10 minute attention span when it comes to a teacher directed activity. I learned to have many plans and back up plans but to be flexible enough to drop them all if a child found an interesting bug climbing up the wall. I also learned never, never to let children run ahead of me on any walking field trip.

I used to have my 5th grade children write scary, Halloween stories because this was one kind of writing they enjoyed. Most writing assignments(before Bay Area) were given as homework -

Some were started in class and completed at home. I would always try to "correct" each paper with the child standing or sitting next to me. It was usually a case of the child acknowledging his errors - these were mostly editing corrections. Very little attention was paid to content unless it was terribly disorganized or especially well written. As a result of this, pieces tended to be short - The less written, the fewer mistakes would be made. Adventure stories ran on and on, with one episode, tersely told, after another and punctuated with then, and then and so then. Reports were a problem because the encyclopedia spelled and punctuated things so well! Maybe a few words would be shifted around but generally, World Book had done the thinking.

Three years ago, before I took the summer Bay Area Writing Course we had a writer in residence.Mr. Hawkins was a genuine writer and he came once a week to teach writing for a half hour. I learned quite a few things from him. He treated the children like fellow writers. He had them write about their own experiences and he introduced us to duologues. He had two people arguing in a duologue and the kids loved it. Sometimes he would read his own writing. One piece was about a visit to a slaughter house in South America. None of us will ever forget that.

After I took Bay Area writing my whole attitude toward writing changed. I realized editing was just one part of writing and that the important thing was communicating thoughts and ideas on paper. I had ideas about the whole process of teaching the writing process but I was afraid to begin. I waited two weeks and then I plunged in. I decided to go ahead with one activity and see what happened. I started with them mapping their rooms, telling a partner about it and then writing down essentially what they told their partners. This worked well as a starter so when it was time to begin writing this year, I tried it again, with 4th graders. It seems to work well because it is personal and concrete. The end results arn't spectacular but as a way of learning the process, a tour through a childs' bedroom works.

I found last year that writing was one way of reaching some less motivated and less able children. Two of last years most prolific writers were the two lowest children in the class. One was learning disabled and the other was considered for retention. The individual attention they received thru their writing was a strong motivating factor. Brian wrote a 12 page star wars piece and Melinda wrote piece after piece about her family. Both children felt a great satisfaction with their writing and even enjoyed revising!

Fourth graders are responding to Bay Area Writing quite differently from fifth graders. Fourth graders love to share with the group of peers. Since my technique this year is basically the same as last year I attribute the differing responses to age. It has been much easier for fourth graders to choose something to write about. Fifth graders felt constrained to choose just the right topic. Fourths seem to put a lot more gusto and feeling in their writing. They are much less inhibited and don't seem to lack confidence in their choice of subject matter.

As the year progresses I will learn a great deal more about fourth graders and about Bay Area Writing. These selected ramblings are an attempt to answer the question"Why do I do what I do in my class? and "What do my students do?" It is not a finished piece of writing since I am not a "finished" teacher.

ROUGH DRAFT

Silver

Reflection on Teaching 10/19

What strikes me most about this task is the limitlessness of it. The question can be addressed in two ways; one, a philosophical treatise about education and teaching; the other an accounting of how and why we do the things we do on a day-to-day basis. Either way, such a paper could stretch on and on. Therefore, I propose avoiding such an unfortunate occurence (and taking you at your word of "just a page or two") by taking neither of the two approaches outlined above.

I suppose the central core of my teaching has always been the goal of developing independent, competent, caring students. Practically, this means giving children the responsibility for planning (when & how to do things, not necessarily what to do). The opportunity to try out different modes of learning to discover what works best for them, and teaching ways of looking at the world (conceptual frameworks, if you like, and models) that can be applied in various circumstances to many kinds of subject matter.

Such an approach to teaching and curriculum design requires a belief that children are active learners. I believe that most kids come to school to learn, be successful and be well-liked by peers and adults - their statements to the contrary not withstanding. Given the opportunity to plan their own schedules, decide when to do things, and be responsible for their own progress, most will learn to do for themselves what adults had always done for them. They will discover that they have control over themselves, and to a degree, what they can do - and what they shouldn't do.

My role as a teacher, therefore, is not that of imparter of knowledge. I need to establish structures and procedures that assist

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and support children as they teach themselves to be independent and responsible. Philosophically, the "Bay Area" approach is compatible with my overall beliefs and teaching style. The idea that children ought to be responsible for their own writing, help each other, and learn about their writing processes makes sense to me. Substituting almost any curricular area for the word "writing" in the last sentence would still leave the sentence true to my intent when I organize a classroom. Children having control over a part of their lives, and exercising that control responsibly, is probably the most important thing we can do in school.

Selected Narrative Accounts of Three Teachers

Never Badmouth the Jets: The First Day of Writing in Diane's Room

September 9th, the first day of school. Diane's greeting, "Hello writers" is met with a few groans. As students squeeze their chairs into a circle, Diane passes out a folder and paper to each.

Chrissy: "These are our writing folders."

Matt: "We're going to write already? How I feel about writing, right? That's what we did last year."

Diane pauses. "No, that might be next. Now I want to see if I know everyone's name, but before I do, we will write about what's on our mind this particular moment. This is just to get into the mood of the day. No one will ever see it, unless you want them to. We'll staple it into your folder."

Seth: "No one will ever see it? That's great."

Diane: "O.K. For five minutes. I'll watch the time."

When the time is up, Diane staples her writing into her folder and asks the kids to do the same. She then goes through her class list, acknowledging those students she already knows and telling the class a little bit about herself.

Diane: "It's good to wear green and white in here. Do you know why?"

Tim: "Because of the Jets?"

Diane: "I am an obsessed Jets' fan. When the Jets lose, you have to be gentle."

Greg: "You mean if we wrote, 'Jets stink,' you'd get angry?"

Diane: "No, I think I'd cry."

Diane then changes pace. "Let's talk about English this year. We will be doing a lot of writing, studying the process and working in writing groups. We will be publishing, too. I'd like the first publication ready for the parent conferences in November. It will be a class magazine in which you publish anything you want."

Her announcement is met with silence.

"We'll also be studying literature, reading some American authors. But we'll start off with a big focus on writing. Do you have any questions?"

Marg: "What do we need?"

Diane: "Oh, thank you. You need a three-ring looseleaf to keep papers in and two other spiral or bound composition note books. One will be your process journal."

(This announcement is greeted by more groans.)

"The other will be your idea log -- a private place to keep ideas and do different exercises."

(This last announcement elicits some questions.)

April: "Can we carry over stories from last year?"

Matt: "Can we throw away our folders from last year?"

Dina: "Do we have to organize our stories like last year?"

Mike: "Do we have to write process for each story we write?"

To all of these, Diane answers: "Don't worry too much about last year. Some things may be familiar, others different. I may use some terminology you are familiar with, but may mean something different."

And one last question from kids: "How do you get an 'A'?"

Diane: "Never badmouth the Jets and if I lend you a pen, give it back."

...

Beginning a Piece for Publication

Day 7: Class begins and Chrissy has her sneakers off. Diane looks around the room, makes sure everyone is in the circle and begins:

> "You need your process journal, your idea log, your heart, your mind, your soul and your shoes. O.K. Are we ready? I want to define the purpose of your two notebooks. Very often we'll be writing in class. Your idea log is where you jot down the idea you get. This is mine . . . I'll show you the cover, but you can't read it. It's where I put the things that are on my mind."

Kathy: "I understand that no one reads yours. Do you mean that no one reads ours but you?"

Diane: "Good question -- no. The same rules apply. I don't want anyone to read mine, so I will not read yours. Now I'd like you to open your process journals. We've talked about publishing a piece before November 19th. Next week I'd like you to bring a piece of writing to class. It can be a poem, a play, a dialogue, whatever. Whether you know it or not, you've started thinking about what you will write. I'd like you to write right now what you are thinking in your process journal."

Mary: "I'm thinking nothing."

Diane: "Why don't you start with that?"

After eight minutes, Diane says, "O.K. I think everyone's finished," and kids respond:

Scott: "That seemed more like the idea log than process."

Mary: "Well, the first step in the process is your ideas, so to me it seems more like process."

Kathy: "I thought it was both -- I wrote in the process journal, then I put it in my idea log."

Diane: "I'd like us to share what we wrote."

process entries:

The following are some samples of kids' [redacted]

"I really don't know what in the world to write!!! Everyone is busy at work, but I feel so out-of-place! I still don't know what she means by 'idea log' or 'process journal.' As a matter of fact, I have no idea in the world why we sit here and write about things that I don't know anything about. Stories we've written, read, heard? What?

This page must probably sound like I've got to be the dumbest person in the world!! But I can't help it -- I'm just starting to know the teachers and I don't have any friends here, except for one -- Dyane. But I don't know what I'm complaining about -- one's better than none!"

Chriss H

* *

"Mrs. Burkhardt said 'You have a story due Monday.' I am thinking oh no, this is another assignment I have to do over the weekend. I have too much homework anyway to do tonight and it is only third period. Why do they do this to me?"

Chrissy T.

* *

"I'm thinking what am I going to write? What kind of writing? How long or short? How will it begin -- end? Now I'm thinking it's due in five days. Don't worry, you'll think of something. I'm almost empty of thoughts now."

Gregg H.

* *

"What I am thinking when she gives us the assignment . . . As I put in my idea log, I want to write a story about racquetball for Tuesday's assignment. I will have the glossary and stuff in it. I haven't yet decided if I am going to be in it or two 'professional' players will be in it, or I will make the players up. I would imagine the glossary will be big. This is more idea than process."

Scott L

* *

"Mrs. Burkhardt said to have a writing piece Tuesday. What should I write? A story? No. A poem? Maybe. What about something I like. Reading books? Reading? What reading does to me? How I feel when I read? Good. I have a topic. But I'm not sure if I like it. It's blah. I think I'll write about a little kid. My baby sister. Yes. What she does, what she looks like. I'll be very descriptive. I got this idea because I have to watch her tonight."

Nancy M

* *

"I started to think about what I wrote in my idea log. The kidnapping story, but to me it sounds very unsophisticated. I'll either do that or do a kidnapping story about a dark, stormy night and a girl walking home at 9:00 p.m. from her friend's house and gets kidnapped. I guess I should write this in my idea log, so that's what I'm going to do."

Kathy H

* *

Process Entries

Kids'~~s letters to Diane~~ - cont'd

"I'm thinking of nothing. I've got it . . . I'm going to take one of the ideas I wrote down yesterday in my Idea Log and use it. I'll probably use the one about the girl my age. It's going to be what happens to her over summer vacation. So it will be really long. I'll probably take a piece of paper and write down periods of time. Like on June 12 (last few days of school) -- July, whatever -- July 20, then she goes to camp until August 5, etc. So I won't go day-by-day and drag it on. I like tragic endings, so she'll probably kill herself or her boyfriend will O.D. or something."

Marg. C.

* *

After kids read from their process journals, Kristen raises a concern: "I thought process was after, you know, what stages you went through in order to write."

Diane: "I need to help you expand your notion of what process is."

Tim: "You want us to love process."

Matt: (Jokingly) "No, you want us to hate you."

Diane: "Do you hate me yet? I think your writing process is unique. I'm interested in learning how you write. I think of all of you as

> writers. Think of all the times you write -- notes, letters, assignments. You know there is a thinking process going on all the time that makes up the writer part of us. Do you know what happens to me when I know I have to write something for next week? Let me read from my process journal: 'No idea -- I envy people who know immediately . . .' Now this weekend, at least pay attention to where your ideas come from."

* *

Diane's Journal:

I like the idea I had for English today. I told them that an assignment was due Tuesday (today was their last class until Tuesday) then immediately I asked that they write whatever they were thinking in their process journal. My theory is that one begins composing the minute an "assignment" like that is given. At some level we think about what to write, how to do it, etc. Conscious or unconscious -- all the time until it's done. Perhaps I talked too much in the midst of the sharing time. Some kids right away had ideas. Most seemed to write about what to write . . . kind of the same thing I [redacted] tend to write in my process journal when I begin to compose a piece. I asked them to do one other thing -- when they settle on an idea, write in their process about where the idea came from. This is all part of my direct attack on their narrow definitions of what it means to have a composing process. I want them to understand that it takes place before, during and after the actual act of writing. While writing this I had an idea for my own piece -- to write about writing process . . . maybe make it a humorous piece or semi-humorous with a point of course.

Writing Groups Begin

> "You are 13 or 14 years old. You are not serious all the time. No one is. I've been in writing groups in moments when something is funny. So don't worry. Be yourselves."

This is the way Diane introduces writing groups. Since these students used groups last year, she feels it is best to begin with what they know and to use tape recorders to monitor how each group develops. This, too, she explains:

> "Let me tell you why I use tape recorders. It's helpful to me to hear your voice reading your piece. I need to hear you speak through it. It helps me make comments to you and also I can help you improve your writing group skills.

Kristen asks: "Do we do what we did last year?"

Diane: "You'll read the piece twice, each person will respond briefly and then you'll each take a turn going through the piece. You'll leave the tape recorder running the whole time and you won't judge other people's writing."

Following this and Diane's brief explanation of how she mixed boys and girls randomly into three-person writing groups ("I want to explore different combinations and find out what combinations work well this year"), the kids collect tape recorders and xeroxed copies of their first drafts and head out of the classroom to scour the school for quiet places to read and listen to one another's writing.

We decide that neither she nor I will sit in and observe, leaving the kids free to work on their own. Some groups return early. Diane is surprised and uses this time to meet with individual students. During the next few days, Diane gives feedback to each writing group before the students go out to continue: To one: "You were in a terrible location. You need to find a quieter spot." To another: "Everyone needs time to respond. You may need to wait a little more before rushing on." To a third: "I was impressed with the comments you made about Tom's piece." To another: "Deal with the writing in front of you. You have the opportunity to make notes. Circle things that strike you. You can be more active."

However, after a few days' work and careful listening to tapes, Diane records the following in her journal:

> "I listened to a lot of tapes today. I think that spending some classtime on 'active listening' would be a good thing to do. Most kids seem uncertain as to how to respond to a piece of writing. This uncertainty covers both a holistic response and "taking a turn" in discussing a piece with its author. On the tapes I hear anxiety. I'm not sure they ever really relax and simply deal with the piece. I also hear in this anxiety their desire to 'do it right.' Is this anxiety left over from last year and being graded A, B, C, D on writing groups or is it part of their attempt to please me?"
>
> "When kids respond holistically (which most don't), they either repeat the piece verbatim or do a 'I got the picture . . .' -- this is never followed by a visual image or 'I got the feeling . . .' and this is never followed by a feeling or 'the point you were trying to get across . . .' and this is rarely followed by a point or message. It's as though they have learned standard or stock phrases, but

these are not grounded in anything concrete enough to have meaning. How to deal with this? It is very difficult to 'teach' a way to respond. There isn't a formula that works for every piece of writing (thank God). So it's hard to talk about what to say initially about a piece. In the past I've tried to get kids to be brief with their first response. I guess I've done that mostly by modeling in class. So that seems like the logical thing to do tomorrow."

"But will anyone voluntarily read his/her piece? My sense of this group is that they have a lot of fear of being put down, laughed at or whatever. One thing I could do is ask certain kids to read their pieces. By doing this I could also 'arrange' a range of pieces that lead to different types of response. Sondra and I can do a couple -- chances are we would respond differently or we could even set that up in advance. Nah, too phony. If it happens, it happens. I would ask kids to write down their initial response to a piece before anyone spoke."

"The second major W.G. thing we need to work on is how to 'take one's turn' in discussing a piece. Too often the W.G. sound like interviews as though all they can do is ask questions: 'Is this a true story?' 'Where did you get the idea?' 'Why did you write this?' etc., etc."

"What is listening? What is active listening? What's the difference? What do I hear in this piece when you read it? How to be an active listener? Active author? Much depends upon the author. How much does he/she care about what is written? Listeners take their cues from authors. Author has something there -- he wanted to do something with this piece, maybe several things. Did he do it? Vital to know."

"Would it be possible to work on this tomorrow, too? Or is that trying to do too much?"

Diane begins class the next day by checking her perception of group work with the class.

Diane: "I'm caught up with tapes now. I'm always impressed hearing you talk about your writing, listening to each other. I think you are all doing the best job you can. There may be things you could avoid doing, maybe there are things you forget, but I believe you are not consciously trying to mess up. Basically, I'm pleased."

"In writing groups, there are some things we can practice. Let's see. What do you do first? You read out loud, right? Then everyone responds, right? Nod your heads. When someone reads in a group I'm in, I want to respond with something that captures briefly what I feel or see or the point the writer is making. I say my response; then, for example, Karen says hers, then Patti says hers."

"Do you know when you are doodling, you're not listening? My voice floats over your ears. I'd like you to pay attention cause what I'm saying is important to me. I want it to be important to you."

"After someone reads, you think, 'Oh no, what should I say?' Right?"

Kids: "Yeah."

Diane: "We're talking about a holistic response. How can we deal with it?"

Seth: "It's hard."

Brian: "It's dumb."

Diane: "It's based on relaxing and listening carefully to the whole piece. For example, how do I know if you are listening to me?"

Seth: "We hear your words."

Diane: "Yes, but that's not a very active process, is it? What does it mean to be an active listener? We want listeners to respond to what's in the pieces, how the author reads, how the life and vitality come through."

Seth: "You mean, say-back?"

Diane: "Yes, but the problem is some of you say back everything. What else can you do?"

Diane DeL.: "We can't say 'I like it.'"

Diane: "Do you know why we make such a big deal about that? It's a limiting response. I go overboard in trying to get people not to say 'I like it.' I'm glad I do that because when people learn other things to say, they can offer much more help to the author."

Chris C.: "I know what I wrote. Someone doesn't have to tell it to me."

Diane: "Is there a better way than repeating?"

Regina: "Summing up. You can say the whole message in a few words. If we repeat, 'You have a dog named Spot,' that's stupid. We know more than that. We can say, 'I can tell you really loved your dog Spot.'"

April: "Right. It's like I want the feeling."

Diane: "That's good. Let me summarize on the board. (Diane writes: what I feel -- what I see.) What else can you do?"

Kathy: "How you feel."

Kristen: "The picture you get."

Greg: "You can say where you get confused."

Diane: "I'd want to save that for later. Now we're working on how to do the first holistic response. What response would you want as an author?"

Nancy: "I have a picture in my mind when I write. I want to see if they have the same one."

Seth: "I rather have a feeling."

Greg: "The response depends on if you care about the piece."

Diane: "I assume you will write only what you care about, as much as that is humanly possible. Let's practice responding."

At this point, Diane reads a piece she has written. She asks the students to jot down their responses on a sheet of paper. We all practice ways of responding to her text; then we discuss which responses were effective and how to classify them. Was it brief? Did it contain an image? A feeling? Did it help clarify? Practice in responding and group work continue for the next few days until Diane decides that it's time to discuss revision, editing and publication.

She writes in her journal:

> "I want kids to think seriously about what they've written so far too and make a decision about a piece to revise for publication. They may not be very aware of their needs right now, but what I think they need to do is make some decisions about a piece to publish."
>
> "What if I had them start off with their process journals and write specifically on the question: How do I feel about the pieces I have written so far? Do I care about them? How much? Do I care enough to revise several times? This is the assessment part of composing just in case they want to know why this is process. (I'll tell them that at the beginning.) After writing about these questions, should I ask -- Who needs to write a new/different draft? Who has a piece he/she likes/cares about enough to publish? Seems like there would be a natural division into the 'yeses' and the 'noes.' Those who are ready to revise can begin revising. First, write ideas for revision in process journal. What if someone says, I need to get another opinion? Why not have Sondra talk to anyone who says this? Physical split -- two different locations. Kids who stay here write in process journal about ideas for revision, talk to each other or talk to Sondra. They also begin revision after writing in process journal. *Hand in Process Journals. I go with kids who feel they need to write a new draft. I talk with them as a group or individually about topics, ideas. Use idea log -- etc., etc. Have them use process journal the same way I do. Draft due Friday. Is the revision due Friday, too? Yes. Then Tuesday can be for writing group."
>
> "If I collect all process journals today, that means two things: 1) reading and commenting in the journals for me (there goes Thursday), and 2) the kids can't write process -- except they could do that first thing on Friday."
>
> "I like this plan I just came up with, except it doesn't free me for conferencing. Maybe this is more important. What I need to do is view conferences as ongoing -- try to do one a day or something like that. That frees me from having to plan busywork."

From Revising to Editing

By October 30, most students have revised their pieces. Now they move into editing. If the magazine is to be typed, proofread, xeroxed and collated by November 19, then students have only one week for editing since a social studies field trip to Boston will interrupt the school schedule. Diane plans many possible approaches in her teaching journal:

> Kids finished up writing groups yesterday (Friday) and we discussed the "next step." For most this is editing which means it's now time to come to grips with this. How will we do this? In order to meet a deadline, I'm willing to sacrifice certain editing specifics, but whatever role the kids do play must be meaningful. Pairs are better than four-person groups. I probably should do something in the first class of the week (the one during which their pieces are due) in order to prepare them for working in pairs. The obvious thing is to xerox a page of someone's piece and use it for practice. Kids could work in pairs, then we could use the overhead. Problems with this are:
>
> - it isn't the kid's own piece (except for the one person's whose it is).
> - the scope/range of corrections needed may be too limited or too broad (depending upon what selection I use) to be applicable to the class as a whole.
> - the kids who know lots about mechanics will pick out everything. The kids who know little will feel overwhelmed and incapable of doing a good job.
> - always a danger with doing this with a large group where the knowledge of specific skills varies greatly. Danger of losing kids or confusing them.
>
> How can I teach a process to go through rather than specifics? Especially since this has to be rushed! Has to be done by Friday. What is the process?
>
> - Authors will have questions -- spelling, punctuation, etc. Or if they don't have them, they ought to. So is that a first step? The author's careful proofreading to mark places he/she questions. But we know how ineffective this has proved to be in the past. It may just be a total waste of time.
> - Is the first step to get right into pairs? First kid reads piece -- tape it. Both listen to the taped reading and make corrections on xeroxed copy. Then they discuss/agree/ etc. or put aside to ask me, Sondra, or someone else who knows.

- Second kid reads his piece and process is repeated for his.
- Original copy is used to indicate corrections and is handed in to me.
- Tone should be questioning -- is this how you spell ______? Should there be a "," here? Could you eliminate this word? Not an ordering or directive tone.

Again, I return to a basic question -- what kind of preparation can/should I do in Monday's/Tuesday's class? The one in which they hand in their pieces. What if I write something which illustrates many of the errors on our editing checklist? What if instead of using an editing checklist developed last year we use part of the first class of week to generate things to look for in editing. I like this better. Could they look at their own pieces to do this? Could we do this first, then use something written by me to put our newly developed checklist into practice? Would there be time? Yes, I think so. (The thing I write should have the lines numbered just to make it easier to talk about.)

- Does it matter what kids are paired together? Strange thought occurs to me that length of piece should be a factor so that the two partners feel an equal tradeoff. Should the pairings be fresh? Kids who haven't worked in writing group on this piece-that might be good, but hard to do. As always, personality must be a factor.

I'm not sure how all this will work, but I think it's worth a try. Great! Now I've given myself something else to do this weekend -- write an error-laden piece.

- Need to borrow tape recorders and get more tapes.
- Would two different colors of ink be good? Confusing -- one more detail to remember.

Maybe the whole class should not work on editing my piece together. Maybe they should work in pairs. Good idea! I could collect them and see what was spotted by each. Or we could discuss it together after __?__ minutes of them working.

A Class on Editing

Diane begins class: "O.K. It's time to devote some attention to editing. Let's use process journals for this." While Brian, Bill and Matt S. go to their lockers for the journals, Diane continues: "Turn to the next available empty page. Think about editing. What are the specifics we need to pay attention to? It's O.K. to do this in the form of a list."

As kids begin writing in their journals, Diane moves to the board and writes, Editing Checklist. Then she asks the class to call out suggestions. Matt says, "Spelling." Coleen, "Punctuation." Kristen mentions verb tenses. Scott says, "Sentence combining. You know when two short sentences can be joined." In response to Kathy's suggestion "grammar," Diane says: "All of this is grammar." Within ten minutes, Diane has covered the board with the following:

spelling
punctuation
end of sentence
middle of sentence
! ? , " "
quotation marks
capitalization
paragraphs
usage - to, too
        there, their

Sentences - complete
            run-on
words left out
neatness
sentence combining
overuse of words
stick to one person (1,2,3)
dull vocabulary

While students copy the growing list into the journals, some quibble over meaning:

Tom: "It's O.K. to make suggestions for words, but I don't think it's necessary to change them."

Regina: "Sometimes it's O.K. to have first and third persons in the same story."

Diane tells them that they will do a practice editing session on her piece. Scott responds: "It probably has a million mistakes in it." Diane hands each of us a xerox copy of her piece and puts us in pairs. We work for about 15 minutes. Then Diane puts her original on an overhead projector and has us review with her some of the editing changes we made. We argue about sentence length and verb tense and Diane and I are both surprised as many students argue that perfectly correct short sentences are "too short" for an essay.

Diane comments in her journal:

> Editing!!!! Yesterday's class (Eng. B) went very smoothly . . . nice level of involvement and general agreement on how my piece should be "fixed" -- some of the major things "wrong" with it. Today's class (Eng. A) reminded me of how complicated it is.
>
> - First of all, there's such a wide range of knowledge. Kristen was talking about consistent verb tenses. I wrote it on the board knowing full well that half the kids don't think they know what a verb is, let alone a verb tense. One consideration - how to make the vocabulary of grammar and mechanics more familiar. How silly for a kid to say, "I don't know what a verb is." Of course he does. He just doesn't know what it's called.
> - Second of all, it's correct to emphasize editing at the appropriate time in preparing a piece, but not when we're operating under such a tight time deadline that we can't do it justice. 95% of me is embarrassed to be giving this little time to it in its proper context. Done properly right now, there could be some big accomplishments in terms of really improving kids' skills or understanding of specific grammatical points. Actually, I'm not sure how I would do it even if I had two weeks right now. Somehow I have to think of an appropriate way to practice editing more frequently or more regularly. If I had "answers" from last year, I would have a good starting point, but if the truth were to be known, I've not mastered the editing bug-a-boo yet. Does the secret lie in an expanded notion of writing groups -- giving them a new task? This is very scary because writing groups are not yet wonderful just in terms of giving feedback and responding well.
> - Third, what about kids being wrong? Today, for example, Kathy and Margaret . . . two of the more able writers (joined by a chorus of others) were absolutely convinced that I must replace then with a comma. If I omitted it and put a period, the previous sentence would be "too short." Here was another place where I needed to stop and spend more time. But I didn't. It is frightening to think of what might happen in the next two days of pieces being edited.
>
> This is something that I really need to get my head together on. It's too easy not to grapple with these issues because at earlier stages of the process we simply say: "Not appropriate," and that's it. I must be completely out of touch with the thinking I did in July during our two weeks, because I remember feeling much more confident about all of this back then.

The next few days could be quite an adventure. I'm going to end up feeling shitty about it, I know.

Despite misgivings, Diane has students work in editing pairs for the next two days. She explains the procedure.

1. Turn on the tape recorder.
2. Read your piece out loud.
3. Play back the tape.
4. Listen with your partner to the sound of your voice reading. See if what you are saying corresponds to what you have written. Edit whenever necessary.

As students leave for editing groups, Diane and I join Margaret, Scott and Kathy as they listen to the changes in Margaret's latest revision. We are all involved as Margaret reads aloud the changes she has made. In one section, Margaret reworked a tricky passage. Kathy responds: "Oh, that's much clearer. That solves it." Later on, we all joke about where Jo, the main character, kicks Tony, the boy who's chasing her. When I tell Margaret that the dialogue sounds realistic, she quips, "It is." Neither Diane nor I are happy about the final part of the piece which ends in murder and suicide. Margaret, too, feels "it doesn't work" and is "trying to find a way out."

Diane records her observation of this session in her teaching journal.

> While sitting with Margaret, Scott and Kathy (writing group), I practiced being a more careful observer. Margaret never read a section entirely without both "crossing out or adding to it" while reading and trailing off at the end with an "I don't know" type of comment, an uncertainty and, at times, a frustration. She also moved constantly -- shifting in her chair, jiggling her leg, etc. This apparent discomfort is not usually part of her. Was it due to both Sondra and me being there? Or to her anxieties about the piece? If I were to ask her, would she even be aware of the apparent anxiety?
>
> Kathy's responses and questions were particularly impressive. She and Margaret are very comfortable in a group together. If they stay together, will this help Kathy feel more secure in her relationship with Margaret?

The students spend two days editing their pieces. Once everything is handed in, Diane asks students to write in the process journals about four items:

1. Specific feedback about writing groups.
2. Evaluation of the editing process.
3. Evaluation of piece; Do you feel proud, etc.?
4. Do you have a suggestion for a title for our magazine?

Below are some student responses. Before Diane reads the pieces and the journals, she comments:

> I will now go through the pieces and see how the editing process worked. My expectations are _not_ very high. I'll make corrections of obvious spelling errors, etc., but that's all. One thing _for sure_ is that there must be more time set aside for editing.

Leslie
Entry #12
November 6, 1981

I wrote my final draft and it was easy because I just had to copy it down. It took me a long time because I had to correct all the spelling. I'm sure that there's alot more words that are spelled un-correctly because Tara really didn't pay attention to it. I can't work well with Tara because she always tells some corny jokes and laughs at them and just fools around. I'm an awful speller and I know it but she is a little higher than I am but she still says my spelling is wrong when it sometimes is correct. It was hard for me to correct her piece because I didn't understand her whole story. It was so confusing that I thought we were to do another writing group. Well I guess she will just have to explain it to everybody who asks her about it. In the begining, I was anxious to show it to people and have them read it but now I'm not sure. Since I've gotten bored with it I feel it's not my best work. I get bored with a piece easily and end up never getting past a first or second draft!! I'm scared about what people are going to think about my piece. That they think it is dumb or something like that. I always am!! We read our pieces into the tape and then played it back. Then looked for all mistakes.

November 5, 1981

This was simple because all I had to do was check over my piece and look for anything I was suspicious of. My editing didn't help much because I'm always careful in checking if everything is correct even on first drafts. Habit I guess.

Entry #17
November 5, 1981

As I thought about the soccer game I'd had this afternoon I also thought about our varsity being county champs and wrote sort of a fantasy. As I wrote I could feel the suspence myself and I could just feel the presure on myself. But being it was a fantasy I made the shot with no problem. I like this story because if other people read it they would think I was conseeded.

Entry #18
November 6, 1981

One thing I could say about writing groups is I really don't like when I'm given a group. There are people that I know of who don't really care about doing it and are also too stupid to do it. People I like to be with are people like Tom Harten and Mike Abata who knows what he's doing and isn't rawdie.

I really wasn't too happy about the way editing groups were aranged, not because of who I was with but because only one person can't in my opinion can't catch as many errors as two or three people.

About how I feel about my piece is simply I'm tired of it because I've known it too long. To me it's boring but that usually happens to me when it goes through the revision process.

After thinking about a name I came up with "Free to Write." I don't think it's good but that's all I could think of. I have an addition to my list of people to be in my group. Jeff Osika.

"Mike,

I have to disagree with you about some people being too stupid to participate in writing groups. Some of the most intelligent students I know are among the worst group participants because they seem to think no one can offer them a single thing.

If you're talking about people who seem not to know what to do, that's different. In most cases it's a matter of them lacking confidence or feeling very scared of what you will think of what they say.

Regardless of who you are with in a group, you should be supportive and responsive."

DLB

Norel
Process Journal Entry
Final Duckling Story
November 6, 1981

I find writing groups pretty helpful if I have the right people in a group. One person I don't like to be with in a group is Tara. I like her but she doesn't help me with my piece at all. She gives a lot of unnecessary stuff for ideas and seems to just think up questions that she doesn't really care about. It's just like she makes them up for a response. I like to be with Chrissy Teufel in a writing [group]. One reason is because I feel comfortable reading my pieces to her and discussing them probably because we're good friends. Also, she gives me useful ideas and asks good questions. I think the editing process is good because listening to my own piece lets me see and correct my own mistakes. I like my finished piece a lot and I am very proud of it. It is exactly what I wanted to write and I would like to have other people read it.

Diane D.
Entry #10
November 25, 1981

1) Writting groups are helping me to get more ideas and to learn more on how to structure my own types of stories.

   I would like to be with Matt Donnelly because we're good friends and I think he could really help me because he knows the way I write.

   And possibly Mike Sloane because I'm used to the way he gives me alot of feedback and I can usually make many good changes that I like.

2) I didn't really like editing groups because in pairs it just seems harder for me to relate with just one person. It's weird.

3) I'm not very proud of it, but I am anxious to gather feedback from the class and my parents because I feel it's basicly a good story but sometimes when I read it it just doesn't seem or feel right.

   I want my parents to read it but I don't want to hear, "Oh! It's a good story!" But I want to hear more ideas about how they felt when they read it. But I feel too embarrassed to just come right out and say it.

4) Writting in Our Minds . . . . . Our Writting . . . . .

Scott

~~October 6~~, 1981

1. I like my writing group just the way it is. I have Margaret and Kathy in my writing group. I think we work well together. I also like it because they really help my story a lot with many comments.

2. I believe the way you did the editing groups were excellent. Working in pairs I think was good because there was plenty of time to get to each piece. The idea of the tape was good too because I found a lot of errors on my own piece.

3. The way I feel about my piece is that I could have done a better job. I really didn't put through enough writing groups. I had the chance but blew it.

Jimmy K.
Entry #8

I kept the story the same after editing. I didn't change it.

Entry #9 (11/6/81)

I think a good group for me was Tim C., Tom H. and me. I thought me and Tim were good. I got alot of spelling eras taken care of and punktiation.

I lik my piece now that I'm don with it even more then before.

I don't know. I feel kinda shy that every one reading my story. People coming up to me and saying that story you wrote was really sick or that was a stupid story you wrote. I can't take the emberisment and then people coming up to and saying that was a good story you wrote then I'll say was it? I thought it stunk to hide the emberisment back and I'll start blushing and get real nervous and when my mother reads it and my step father and they start to coment on it then my mother takes it into work and every one reads it and when she has a party and they say he's the one who wrote the story and she'll say "He's the one."

I think the proses was very good. It was clear for me to understand it.

I think a good name would be All By Us.

Chriss H

1. Writing Groups -

Since I switched English classes, my writing groups have been going well. I feel it's better to get the real beef from a friend. Dyane and Regina tell me honestly what they thought of my story and sometimes how I can change it to make it better.

2. Editing Process -

The process we used was/is a good one. It helped make things easy in the end, even though at times I couldn't think of things to say -- it worked out for the best. It helped the story shape up.

3. Finished -

I think the piece I wrote this year, this time, was the best piece I've ever written. I'm very proud of it and would love to share it with anyone who wants to hear it, and I really hope someone will read it.

4. A Good Title Would Be -

8th Grade Camels Run in the Desert

(or)

8th Grade Camels That Spit Hay

(or)

An 8th Grade Camel Stalkes the Night

Matt D.

Entry #9

1. Specific comments about your writing group. (Let me know now who you want or don't want to be with and why.)

   I want to be with them and Sondra. They helped a lot. So did Mrs. B. with her comments on my piece. I feel it's stronger because of my group.

2. Evaluate the editing process we used (pairs, taping, writing, reading, etc.).

   Pairs are better than last year when we had 4 people. You have more time on your piece and the type isn't used like we use them in writing group.

3. Now that your piece is completed, how do you feel about it? Are you proud, anxious for parents to read it?

   I like my piece as it is. I don't want [to] change it. I want my dad to read it to see what he has to say.

#16

1) I like the writing group I'm in or was in last time (me, Matt, John and Sondra) because I got [the] most out of it for my piece and agreed with what they said. So it helped me more than the other ones I went to. They also responded good to my questions. They didn't just say nothing.

3) I feel pretty good about [it], but I'm getting a little sick of writing it over and over again. I don't know if I'd want other people reading it though.

4) Our writings. It really didn't knock the socks off of me, if you know what I mean. I thought it was alright, but I was so sick of it. I really don't like it because I'm so sick of it. Most people said they liked it. But I wish there were more questions then there were, but I really didn't mind.

"Chris,

It's hard for me to tell how much of this reaction is just your natural tendency to put your writing down. I guess I have to assume that you are being as honest as possible in here, don't I?

I'm a little surprised that you still feel 'sick of the piece.' Usually (or often) that feeling passes once a piece is done and published and you can feel that your revisions and copying over were worthwhile.

Maybe that piece wasn't something you really wanted to write. Are you writing lots in your idea log these days? I bet you're not. I definitely recommend it. Wasn't there a time earlier this year when you were writing frequently in it and liking it? How about you and I making a pledge to each other that we will write in our private journals (idea logs) for at least 10 minutes a day from now until Christmas vacation? I get mad at myself when a few days go by without writing so this would be a good thing for me to do too. How about it?"

Love,

DiB, 12/7/81

Kathy H.

November 7, 1981

I'm so rushed! I have so much homeowrk and my algebra I don't understand. At least we get a sort of break from school at Boston. Well, about my story. So far the people I have worked with in a writing group are Margie, Scott, Nancy, Chrissy and Pam Stubbe. The first 3 are excellent because they give me a lot of feedback. I especially like working with Margie and Scott because of the large amount of feedback and also all of us aren't shy with each other, so we aren't afraid to say or ask anything which helps a great deal. I didn't really like working with Pam and Chrissy because the feedback they gave me wasn't really helpful, and they are both kind of shy. I don't want people who are shy and unhelpful to me because then I get nothing done. I felt that the editing process went very well. It's easier to work in pairs than in groups like last year because too many people talk at once and people argue and fool around a lot. Scott and I worked well together, but a few times we got stuck for a long time. To solve this, we just worked at the problem for awhile and eventually we found the answer. The tape recorders didn't help at all because it went too quickly (listening) so after the first time, we just stopped playing the tape and just read it to ourselves to make corrections. It's a lot easier. Yes! I'm very proud of my piece. This is the first time I've written real dialogue and a story about teenagers. I'm anxious to let my parents read it. Even during different drafts I kept on asking them to read it to see what they thought. All I got back was "That was really good. What a weird turnaround!" I want everyone to know that I've finally finished my piece. After all it was hell! (Excuse my language.) But now in the end I'm really glad I stuck with it!

November 8, 1981

My god! I can't believe it. As I was breezing through my journal to see how many entries I've written (there are 7), I remembered my field hockey piece and it was about me scoring the winning goal. (Uh oh, Mrs. B.'s gonna kill me. I forgot to leave comment space from page to page.) At that I took a double take and freaked out. (How do you like that hippie talk?) Just last week when we played Port Jeff, I scored my first goal and it was the winning one too! We won 2-1. Isn't that weird? Well, I just thought I'd share that little freaky info with ya! Bye! Bye!

> "Kathy - I agree that you and Margaret and Scott were a good writing group. Between the three of you, you seemed to cover just about every aspect of each other's pieces. You and Margaret will stay together in W.G., but I might switch Scott to work with some different people. I'm not sure though and it will still be a week or two before we return to intensive writing, so I don't have to make up my mind just yet.
>
> After you saw our magazine and saw your piece in print, did you feel that all of your time and struggle was worth it? I hope so.
>
> The other day (when Sondra's boss was in advisory lunch), you made a comment about process journals -- I think it was that you still don't understand why we keep them or what you're supposed to get out of it. Am I remembering correctly?
>
> I need to know more about what you're thinking about that. Are you concerned that you 'don't know what to write?' I'm putting this on my list of things to talk to you about. We'll have to get together soon." (DiB, 12/7/81)

(1) Kathy and Scott are really helpful. They are the people I've worked best with so far. Scott suggests basically small changes, minor things. While Kathy notices major things. I guess that she picks up. The other things are in and comments on the overall piece. So it's a good combo.

I'm not sure if what I said about K. and S. is right, that Scott suggests small things while Kathy's are larger, but it just seems to me that they aren't giving me the same comments. So we cover the whole piece. They pick up everything and then if I ask they give me good suggestions. I think that's because we're basically on the same level with our writing. We work good. ✓

"Yes, that's how it seems to me too from listening to tapes."

("Level of thinking too!")

(2) I feel O.K. about this piece. The only thing I'm worried about is when other people read it will they know what's going on? Did I make it clear? I think I did. I'm pretty proud of it. ("Good!") It was a lot of work. I'm not having my parents read it until it's typed and in the magazine. Noreen has read draft 2 and 3 so she'll be surprised at how I've changed it. She'll like it.

I just hope the piece can be understood when it's read by other people that haven't read all 4 drafts.

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Diane's Comments on the Editing Process and Publishing Process

English B now.

Pieces are handed in. Boston excitement reigns. Rooming list has been posted. Lots of questions.

Chris C   is upset that she did not experience the editing process. She counted on doing it today, but did not give me her piece to be xeroxed until this morning because she was still revising. There are a few others who did not go through it yet: Regina (still writing), Matt Sq   (lessons), Matt S (absent), Margaret (still writing) and Seth (brought it in this morning).

Chris has mentioned it to me several times this period. There are a few of those kids for whom their dilly-dallying around will affect their grade. I make a clear distinction between Margaret and Seth (for example) as far as the reasons for not going into the (just had a funeral for my last black Visibex pen which died a rapid death in mid-sentence) editing procedure as everyone else did. Seth plainly was not using his time well. I'm sure (whether he knows it or not) that he was not committed to this piece. Plus he seems to have the Lane family "no homework syndrome."

There's been a nice feel to these classes today as we sit and write and talk quietly every now and then. I'm very aware of a sense of completion and told each class at the beginning that they had every right to feel very proud of themselves for the work accomplished in getting their piece finished.

Generally, the feedback on the editing process is positive. Some good points were made about the value of a group of three as opposed to two. It would be possible to have some three's and some two's and let them choose. A few kids thought that taping it was very good. Others thought it was a waste of time. I wonder if they really did it the way they were supposed to.

I think one of the things I do well is talking with kids one-on-one. I have always been comfortable with that.

Diane's Comments on the Editing Process and Publishing Process - cont'd

I just read through all the process journals. Real range of views on the prospects of publishing a magazine and having it read by others. Tom Harten does not feel like his piece is ready to publish. He's not proud of it yet, and feels he rushed it. A number of kids don't want their parents to read what they have written because of anticipated criticism. Jim K. anticipates embarrassment if other kids read his piece regardless of the tone of comments they will make to him.

After thinking about this, I think it's O.K. that some kids are really nervous or uncomfortable. For one thing, maybe that feeling will change once they get some feedback on it or once they actually see it in print. For another thing, their fear shows an investment of self. If they're worried because they think their piece is shitty, maybe they'll care more about the next piece. If they're worried because they may have put themselves on the line too much, I don't think there's anything wrong with that.

Using Models for Writing: Interior Monologues

In January, Diane distributed an example of an interior monogogue:

JUSTICE?

Why'd she have to pick on me? I didn't have my hand up. She could have picked on any other kid in the class. I don't know the answer, and she knows it. Why doesn't she pick on some other kid instead of staring at me? The whole class is looking at me; waiting for my answer. If I'm bright, so what, big deal; there'll just be another time. What could the answer be? Good, she's looking around the room; maybe she'll pick on someone else. Then I'll be the one that can laugh and make fun of him. I'll be able to stare at him; make him nervous. No? She's looking back at me and I still don't know the answer. Don't look at me, you idiot, pick on someone else. Wish there never was school or teachers. Good, she's looking around the class again, so maybe she'll pick on someone else. She always picks on me; pick on someone else! I wish the bell would ring -- oh no! She saw me looking at the clock! Now she's mad. The bell!!! Saved!! No! She won't let the class go; she's keeping us after. She can't! At last, I'm free!

After students read it silently and aloud, Diane asked the students to write their own on a subject of their own choice for class the next day. She also told them they could begin planning their interior monologues in their process journals. Below are excerpts from process journals on this process.

Chrissy T.

When I sat down to write a monologue for tomorrow's assignment, I had no idea at all for it. So I tried doing some of that automatic writing. I don't really know if it helped me or not. I wrote but constantly without lifting my pen but all I wrote about was all the tests I had this week because that is what was in my head. I also wrote that I had no idea at all as to what I was going to write about. After I read the page on which I did my automatic writing, I got an idea. Why not write about the minute right before I get a marked test paper back and the tense moment it is. Then I thought that I'd better not do that because not many people get nervous about getting a test paper back.

I sat and thought some more. Then it was time for me to get the clothes out of the dryer. I didn't want to do this task though because the dryer is in the cold basement. Everytime I go down there I freeze. I walked to the door of the basement still thinking about the story I had to write. I stood and the door debating whether I should open it and freeze myself. Thinking this reminded me of going into a pool and how the first step is the hardest because the water is so cold. I liked this idea and thought it would be good to write my monologue about it.

* *

Kathy

Just some thoughts about writing. I think the hardest part of writing is to first get an idea. Then, when you get the idea sometimes more ideas on the topic come and it's hard to decide which idea to use. Ya know what I mean? It's hard to describe. Well, interior dialogue. I was in the shower thinking of what to write. I didn't want to do school because the Justice piece was about school. I know, it's a big topic but I still wanted to do something different. Then I thought about family life. Mine in particular. I had been thinking of what Scott had done for his states and capitals map. Then I thought Scott, what if I did how he scares the heck out of me all the time and how he attacks me (not what you think), only fooling around, throwing the dog's sock at me. Sitting and waiting for the attack. I'll try it. That was so incredibly easy. In the beginning I wrote I am afraid I read it over and said, "I'm not afraid but I'm not sure how to explain the way I feel." It's like a funny kind of afraid. That's about the only place I stopped. I was waiting to see when I'd stop but I never did until I reached the end. I can tell I didn't stop too because of writing so fast and hard I have writer's cramp. Yuk!

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Kathy H.

We were reading our interior monologues today in class and after Mrs. B. gave the assignment to do another one except from someone else's point of view and she said something about a cat but I can't remember what. Anyway I immediately thought of my dog Cindy and when we feed her she dances and we tease her not letting her have the food. One night my Mom said I wonder what she's thinking when we do this to her. It seemed like a great idea - to think of what the poor dog's thinking about all of this - to use for the assignment. I'm going to try it!

No problem. I finished in 5 minutes. It was fun to imagine what the dog thinks. I added what we do at her dinner time and things she does, stretches, etc.

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Karen

I just wanted to tell you how much I enjoy interior monologues. I think I have alot of thoughts that I can write for one! One question of mine is if we can write one of these monologues as a story well monologue on our own personal magazines. I really like writing a monologue as being some[one] else. Like are last monologue being my dog.

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Margie

I really don't know how to end this. If it wasn't a monologue I would of had him (Larry) come over and start to talk. I wanted to use dialogue but I couldn't. It really didn't take me long and I got the idea right away. I don't think that I could have done as good without the example. It was helpful. I could have gone on with this but I just didn't feel like it. If I was you (Mrs. Burkhardt) I'd be pissed that so many people aren't here. I am. Where are they?

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Matt D.

I found it was easyier then I usally write. I was thinking when I was writing how easy it is. Some reason I enjoy writing like that. I'm try more like that.

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April

This was very easy because these were my thoughts just a few seconds ago when this happened I want to do another one. I think I will. I really enjoy this type of writting. I'm back. I just ate dinner. My second monolog I will problly use parts of for the story I am writting now.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

Scott

I'm going to write about me going into a racquetball tournament. I will walk into the court and see this kid that is great. And what will go thru my head.

I just wrote this with no problem but didn't know how to end it. So I read the sample and ended it the best I could do.

I'm going to write about the kid that he has to play. He will see him walk into the court and think how easy this kid looks.

I decided to have the kid change his mind in the middle. He looked at what he was wearing and got phsyced out. I still had trouble ending it.

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Leslie

Let's see, I have to write another interior monolouge (sp?) Mabey I'll do one from yesterday. I don't want to do the trip. Well, I want to make the topic out of school. Mabey in home or out side. Humm. Mabey I'll write about my B-day. Let's see, I'm out of the room, standing at the door and everybody is going to jump out at me. No. Tara is going to accuse me or sombody else. I don't like [the] idea anyway. I think I'll be entering a dark room and wondering what is inside. Yea. I like that!! OK! That's what I'll do. Now, how should I start it? Hum.

Oh, why don't this dumb hall light work. Now I have to fumble in the dark. Let's see, I'm positive there are 13 steps and my door is at the top of the stairs to the left. The door knobs even with my hip then twist to the right and the light switch is even with my elbow. Now all I have to do is try it.

Jeff O.

[Before writing] I'm not sure weither or not I should write something having to do with school. I don't think I should or I might start sounding like that kid we reed about. I really don't have any ideas. Maybe because I'n not exactly sure how an interior monolugue goes. Does it have to be just like that kid's but on a different subject or can it just be you talking about something just not with anybody and with no dialouge?

[After writing] It was easier then I thought if it's right. It took me a while to think of an idea and I had to write 2 drafts , a 1st and 2nd, but it's done.

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Chrissy T.

Today I was told in class that I was supposed to write another monologue but write it as if I was a different person. Right away I knew what I was going to do for my monologue. I wanted to write as if I was four years old and I was waiting for my sister to come home from school. I don't know where I got this idea from, I just thought of it.

When I sat down to write today, I had no trouble at all. I put myself in the place of a four year old kid waiting for her sister and wrote how I felt. As I wrote I tried to make the monologue sound as if a little kid was thinking. I wrote in simple, uncomplicated sentences that only a four year old would think in.

I thought that writing a monologue was very simple. The hardest part was thinking of an idea.

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The next day in class, Brian asks, "Are we going to read?" To Diane's affirmative response, he says, "Can I go first?" Diane says, "Let's go around the circle, OK?" Chrissy T. goes first and reads the following about diving into a pool:

THE CHILLS

The water looks so icey and cold. The first step is the hardest one. I hope that once I am in the pool I don't turn into an ice cube. Maybe I should just dive in, that way I will get all wet at once rather than going in slowly and getting the chills. On the count of three I will jump. One . . . two . . . thr--. No, I can't do it, the water seems so cold. By the time I get in the pool it will be dinner, then I won't have any time at all for swimming. Okay, I will jump in now and get the first step over with. This time I'll count to five and jump. One, two . . . three . . . four . . . five. SPLASH!! Oh, the water isn't as cold as I thought it would be, in fact, it is quite warm.

Then Leslie reads about answering the telephone:

The Phone Call

-Ring- Was that the phone? Yes? Oh boy. What should I say? Should I pick it up? I've prepared a speech, let's see, where is it? Oh know! I've lost it? Check back pocket? Check right, check left! NO! Oh no!! Check front, right, NO! It's hopeless! Oh, there's still left!! Ah, here it is! Is it him? Oh boy, is my heart in my throat? It sure feels like it. Is it going to ring again? Comon! Please don't! Phew, it didn't! My hands are trembling! -Ring - "Hello?" Klunk!

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

When we got to Billy, he says, "Mine is stupid."

Diane: "You're calling a first draft of something you've never done before, 'stupid'?"

Billy: "Yes."

Seth: "No one will shoot you down."

Brian: "We'll laugh with you, not at you."

Billy is still reluctant. Di resolves the issue by saying, "OK, don't read now. Maybe you'll want to read later."

We continue around the circle, until everyone's had a chance to read. The kids say "they sound read -- like you are right there." Diane reads hers and explains, "Mine comes from a real experience. I pictured a particular moment in 9th grade. The boy was Stan Medbury. I thought I couldn't talk to him."

Below are more samples of what students wrote:

Brian

First

Come on, it's easy. Shutup fool! How does he go down so easally it look like a pro at it. OK know, which goes first, the left ski or right, or maybe both? Should I ask someone? No then they would think why I am out here for what's the use and maybe think I am kidding and forget to tell me and go down the hill. Hay!! Who did that, who just push me. It's that boy he probley didn't mean it. Oh no, I am going to crash!! I'm going to end up like one of those guys that get there leg mangled up and end up in the hospital for 3 weeks. Wow, a close one. Thank God he moved. Oh no, a boy fell in front of me. Should I yell "watch out"? Wow. Oh no, I just went over a jump. Oh lord, please don't let me die. Please as I landed with a thump. And the whole experience ended because the rest of the ways I went on my rump.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

Greg

Homework

Why does it always happen to me? I always forget homework and the teacher doesn't believe me. I have a F+ final grade in effort and not much better in content. I think that the teachers think that I don't even try. Oh no, my math homework is at home and I have math now. "O.K., George. What's your excuse this time??!!! . . ."

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

Chriss H

I'm Too Smart for Them

Oh, please, please don't come over this way, you fool! Go away! Please! If anyone saw me I'd die, my parents would kill me; after they ground me 'till I'm 80 yrs. old! What am I thinking! Sometimes I'm as stupied as they are; their not gonna catch me, no not me, never. I'll just shove it in my jacket an act normal -- my God! Did they see me? I think my hart has speed up! Why the hell am I shaking? Don't worry, Chriss. You got it, now to get out of here, fast. Ahh! I'm out! I did it! I really did it! Those stupied jerks, think thier so cool. I really burnt them! As I turned around I saw the store manager and a security cop; as they just stood there shaking thier heads staring down at me, I said to myself - "They really burnt me!"

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

Scott

The Tournament

Oh my god, look at this kid. Is this who I have to play. He is going to kill me! I don't want to play him. Should I give up? No, I will try my best. That is just the luck of the draw. I will never win a racquetball tournament with draw's that are like this. What should I do? What should I do? The only thing I can't do is win. I musn't give up. I'll just try my best, that's all. Maybe there is some mistake. Maybe I don't play this kid. He does look a little good for this age group. Well, let's go. I had better play good, that's all.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

Margaret C.

I must look like a jerk sitting here next to Linda. She's the most popular girl in school. Oh God! Here comes Bobby. The prom is coming up and I want him to ask me. But I can just dream on because he's walking over now and he's gonna ask Linda. He's so close! Oh damn. He's saying Hi to Linda. I must be invisible or something. Oh, my heart's broken. He's just asked her to the prom! My life's over! Guess what. Now here comes Larry. He's so fat and ugly. What a bore. I've got to say Hi he's looking right at me . . . No, no. Don't ask me!! Too late, he's asked me.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

Matt S

Trouble

Oh no, here she comes. She's gonna blame it on me. She always does. Everything that happens she blames it on me. I don't know why. I'm not a bad guy. I do all my work. I hope she accuses someone else. To late, she accused me. I don't know what to tell her. I always fold under pressure.

* *

Tim

I realy blew it this semester. Boy, when Mom see's the grade on my math test she's gonna kill me. Maybe I'll hide it. No, that's dumb. She has to sign it sometime. I'd forge it if I could write as neat as her. No way. Mr. A. isn't blind. He's had me for a year. He got to know my handwriting. Maybe I should just show it to her and get it over with. On, I don't no what to do. If I show it to her, I could get in alot of troble and if I forge her signature and Mr. A. finds out, I'll be in troble with him and he'll tell my Mom anyway. So, no matter what I might get in troble. Oh, what the hell, I'll show her . . . Mom.

* *

At the end of class, Diane asks: "How about writing another interior monologue for tomorrow? What if, this time, you try doing the inner thoughts of someone else?" The kids think it's a good idea and begin talking about options as they leave the room. "Could you be a member of the opposite sex?" "Could you be an adult or a child?"

Below are some more interior monologues:

Brian

Should I help him? He looks confused. Well, if I go over there and ask him if he needs any help -- but then if he knows how to ski he will think I am a jerk. Well, there he goes down the hill. He looks like he's in trouble. I better go help him. But what can I say? On no, I better move that guy so he doesn't hit him. Oh no! He's head[ed] right at the jump. Thump!! I think he's OK.

* *

Leslie

Scared of the Dark? No Way!

Why won't anybody change this dumb hall light? Now I have to fumble in the dark. Let's see, once I counted the steps, there's 13. Once at the top turn left one pace. The door is right there. The door knob is even with my hip and the door knob turns to the right. The light switch is even with my lower shoulder. Simple! Know all I have to do is try it!

OK, here are the steps. Ready? OK, 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4 . . . 5 . . . woops! Thud! Ow, I hurt my knee! (sigh) Now were was I? Oh yea, 3 . . . 4 . . . 5 . . . 6 . . . 7 . . . 8 . . . 9 . . . -- 11 . . . 12 . . . There, at the top! Now, turn left one pace. OW! How'd that wall get there? Mabey I should walk forward a little. Thump. Oh brother, I'm positive there were only 13 steps. How did 2 more get there? I better be more careful! Get to your feet but be careful! OK, feel to see if ANYTHING is in front of you! No! Good. At the top (and this time I mean it!). Now, turn left one pase, at the door . . . Boom! Yup, it's there. Hip, door knob, OK! Got it! Hu, what was that? A noise, it came from inside my room! Oh no! Should I open the door? Yes, just a crack, reach your hand in. Oh know, where's the light? Oh know, ah, there it is. Click.

* *

Chriss H

I should never have come to work with this cold, I don't like this job. Maybe I'll go see Gerry in Men's underwear. Gee, it sure is crowded today. "Hey, sweetie, I saw that," I felt like saying. When I saw that girl stuff something in her jacket. I just followed her around untill she left. When I noticed I wasen't the only one following her, so was the manager. We both went out the door after her, she turned around and we grabbed her.

* *

Scott

The Tournament II

Is this the kid that I have to play? Wow, is this going to be easy. I can tell just by the way he is looking at me. Look at his face, he looks dumbfounded. He walked in with no confidence. I can tell he isn't so good. But wait, look at him. I mean what he is wearing. He has on addidas! Wos, is he lucky. Ane he has a _____! I don't believe it! He must be good. I think I'm in trouble. If he has an addidas and a _____, he really must be good. I think I better play hard because he looks like he is good. No confidence, but looks like he might be good.

* *

Chrissy T

Waiting

When is she going to get home from school? I've been waiting all day to show my sister my new Raggety Ann and Andy game. I wish I was allowed to go to school, but I am only four years old. Mommy says I can't go to school untill I'm six. That's not fair! What a bummer. I wonder what it is like to ride on one of those big yellow school buses. I'll have to wait two more years to find out the answer. What a bummer. Oh, I hear the front door opening. At last my sister is home. I'd better get my new game ready to show her.

* *

Tim

Boy, I don't know what I'm going to do with him. I know he can do

Tim

better than this. He usualy does very well in math. I wonder what happend with this test. Maybe I should have a talk with him and ask him what happend. I don't know, he might think I'm being a nag. I don't want to be a nag, but I have to do something.

PROCESS JOURNALS AND WRITING GROUPS

On Friday, March 12th, Diane provides kids with a written description of the magazine assignment. (See following page for a copy.) From this point on, students will be working at their own pace, drafting pieces in different forms or from different points of view, meeting in writing groups, and using their process journals for planning, revising, and communicating with Diane.

Also during this class Diane asks for written feedback on writing groups and she collects process journals so she can read through them quickly. She comments on all of this in her journal:

> Friday, MAGAZINE REQUIREMENTS
>
> They read these.
>
> We discussed a bit. Few questions.
>
> Tom G   got very negative. Thinks it's going to be "impossible!" I don't know exactly where he's coming from. He sure doesn't do himself any favors with his in-class reactions sometimes. He seemed to expect more support Friday from his classmates. What he got was dumped on. I quickly intervened ... the last thing he wanted, I'm sure.
>
> Chris told me that the piece about a very close friend who happens to be a boy that she had written in her idea log a long time ago can now be shared. She's revising it over this weekend.
>
> Writing Groups:
>
> Talked about writing groups. "I don't like four people in a group, etc." "How do you like the double periods, etc." After a few minutes talk, they wrote me info about their current groups. Most are positive. Even some of the four-person groups intend on staying together.
>
> April is very positive about Chris, being with her and Karin. That one surprised me.
>
> Tim, Jim, and Mart S want to stay together all year.
>
> There are some who aren't completely content so I have some tinkering to do. to do with Matt, Chris, Margaret + Diane.
>
> I don't know what, they all want to stay together. Margaret is the only one to perceive the dynamics, but she has no specific suggestions.
>
> I want to work on it later tonight. I told the kids that I needed to spend more time with groups, that they were not of the quality I thought they could be. I explained

ENGLISH
INDIVIDUAL MAGAZINE ASSIGNMENT

NAME ______________________________
March 12, 1982

ASSIGNMENT: Each student will publish his/her individual magazine containing original pieces of writing. All pieces will be drafted, discussed in writing groups, revised and discussed again as necessary, edited and prepared for typing.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS:

1. You must have a theme for your magazine. All pieces must relate in some way to your theme.
2. Your magazine must contain pieces written in at least three (3) different modes or forms. (such as poems, dialogues, monologues, essays, first-person narratives, third-person narratives, diary, letters, etc, etc.) Switching the point of view for a piece will also count as a different mode.
3. Your magazine must be a minimum of three (3) typed pages not including the front and back cover.
4. Your magazine must have a cover designed by you with the title, your name, the date. You should work on your cover after you finish writing.
5. Inside the front cover of your magazine there must be a FOREWORD. The foreword is a brief statement explaining some information about your magazine, its theme, anything you want to say about the pieces you have written, thanking the typist and all those who have been helpful to you. If you wish you may dedicate your magazine to someone.
   THE FOREWORD WILL BE THE LAST PIECE YOU WRITE FOR YOUR MAGAZINE.
6. Inside the back cover will appear ABOUT THE AUTHOR. This is a biographical essay of 150-200 words written in the third person. It tells about you, your interests, etc. This piece may be written at any time.

(OPTIONAL) Illustrations for your pieces are optional.

DEADLINE: All pieces must be ready for editing by April 8, the day before spring vacation. (It's possible that some will need an extension. Special arrangements will be worked out as necessary with no penalties.)

PROCEDURES AND USE OF CLASSTIME, ETC.

Most of you will have a lot of choice in deciding how you proceed. You may wish to write drafts of several pieces before revising any one piece. Or you may wish to work on one piece until it is finished before beginning a new one. You should do what makes sense for you. BUT YOU SHOULD WRITE EVERY DAY.

Pieces must be turned in to me so they can be xeroxed and so you can receive credit for the work you are doing. PLEASE HELP ME KEEP MY RECORDS UP TO DATE by following this simple request.

PROCESS JOURNAL. Do I even need to mention that you will use your process journal in the way that is most helpful to you for all pieces you write and all revisions, and for all thoughts you are having about your pieces? No, I don't need to mention it. YOU MUST hand you p.j. in to me at least once per week. You may do this at your own convenience (times when you won't need it for writing, etc.)

(please turn the page)

Classtime should be used primarily for writing groups, conferencing with me about your pieces, conferencing with a friend, etc. Classtime may also be used for working on pieces, writing in p.j., writing in idea log, etc.

Writing groups should decide their own weekly schedules--whatever the group wants. In other words, if you want to schedule two or three class periods per week for writing group discussions, you may. Just make sure that pieces are handed in for xeroxing. NO ONE MAY XEROX HIS/HER OWN PIECES WITHOUT A NOTE FROM ME.

HELPFUL HINTS: When you are revising, put your time and energy into those sections of a piece which need to be rewritten rahter than spending time merely recopying parts that you are already satisfied with.

In order to make revision easier, USE THE CUT AND PASTE REVISION method. Write on one side of a page so that the page can be cut apart. Double space your revisions so that when it comes time for final drafts and editing, it will be easier for you to prepare them.

Write in pen: black or red are better than any other for xeroxing. Blue is o.k. Pencil xeroxes very poorly!!!!!!

~~HAVING READ ALL THIS, WHAT QUESTIONS DO YOU NOW HAVE?~~

QUESTION:

ANSWER:

QUESTION:

ANSWER:

this as something that was true (I thought) because of my priorities. I hadn't made writing groups as high a priority as some other issues. I want to listen to tapes. It can be so time-consuming. But it must be done.

Feedback on double period writing groups is positive. Dennis likes it, the kids like it, except they don't like having a double period of Math at all. They'd like the double period of English without having the double period in Math! I have this in writing from kids. The drawback to double periods is the number of kids who can't do it because they don't have Dennis for Math. It affects more groups than I would like. But since most kids like it I guess it's worth trying to do again.

Process Journals:

I collected English B's process journals to read quickly 9th period. I always tell myself when I'm reading process journals during the day in order to return them quickly that I will not write very much. Inevitably I can't not respond. This makes me rush other things or ignore them. Like I still haven't turned in the stuff from Monday because I refuse to take time to do that rather than do stuff that relates to kids. That's why I don't hang out in the teachers' room either.

A fun thing about process journals right now is the growing awareness on the part of some kids that when they complete their first process journal that I supply the second. (unless their first one has a bunch of pages ripped out and that's why it's full now) The other day I gave Margaret process journal #3. Matt, sitting next to her, was amazed. Leslie and Dawn received theirs yesterday. Diane Deluca is almost ready. Kathy too. It's becoming the "in" thing.

This makes me think about conferencing which is not a new thought lately. It's been on my mind. One day last week while I was responding in process journals it occurred to me that the dialogues I maintain with kids through their process journals are a form of conference. Leslie and I have great communication in writing and have for a month or more. Just recently does our direct communication (in person) feel as good as our written dialogues. In her social studies journal she has begun writing to me about cliques and groups specifically what she calls "Margaret's group"--the group that can never get hurt. It's very ironic. Margaret worries what Leslie et al. think of her. Leslie says she won't talk in class if Margaret's there for fear of being hurt, put down, etc. Can I be a link between them? I've told each that they really belong in the same writing group and that someday I'm going to be brave enough to do it.

Another written conference is occurring between Matt Sq and me over the issue of trust--trusting me enough to allow me to work with him. He lied in a process journal entry about a piece having to do with his guidelines. He said it did but later confessed that it didn't at all. Each time we've done guidelines it has not been a positive experience for him at all. After I point blank asked him if he was being stubborn (answer yes or no) and what it would take for him to trust me enough to talk to me about his guidelines. Finally we talked for a few minutes after school on Thursday. This is a beginning. Matt is tightly closed and very distant from others. He likes it that way--it's safe.

I guess I think of almost all the journal responses I do as a form of conferencing. Jeff and I have been writing about relationships. He asks me qustions and draws arrows like this showing me exactly where to write my answer.

In nearly all cases, the writing back and forth in process journals or social studies journal eventually leads to an in-person conversation about something that's been written.

Now as magazine work begins I think I have a good basis for talking to kids even though I have had only a few "official conferences."

WRITING GROUPS AND WRITING CONTINUE

Monday, March 15th, is Curriculum Conference Day. Tuesday, March 16th, Diane works on switching some writing groups members to other groups. From her journal:

> What I should be doing right now is finalizing the writing groups based upon the notes written to me Friday. I know though that waiting until 3rd period means it will get done with less agony, because it will have to be. I want the kids to turn in a schedule today of their writing group time for the week. I'm so tempted to put Margaret and Leslie together. Leslie wrote in her S.S. journal about Margaret and "her group"--she wrote in response to a question I had asked about something she had written previously. I wrote back a long response about how they both worry about the same things, etc. Leslie thinks Margaret has no problems, no worries--she is accepted by everyone, respected, etc. If only she knew. Time for conference with Margaret.
>
> Period 3: Writing groups are straightened out in a way I'm fairly satisfied with. Margaret was a help. So was Chris. Margaret suggested Brian as a third with Diane and her and suggested I ask Chris about John Pratnicki with the two of them. Chris said, "No problem." Leslie, Dawn, and Kristen are together and that worries me a bit, but maybe Sondra can get them off to a good start tomorrow.
>
> Wonderful talk with Margaret this morning. We both agreed we could have used twice as much time to talk.

Diane begins class by discussing writing groups and reviewing classroom procedures for the magazine project.

Diane: I made changes in writing groups based on what you wrote on Friday. Since it may never be perfect, you need to keep on working and keep me informed. Also from now on I won't be able to tell you what to do during each class. It's up to you and the schedule you set for yourself and your group. We won't have writing groups today, but I will want your writing group schedules for the rest of the week.

Margaret: You mean if the three of us want to meet tomorrow, we just tell you?

Diane: That's right. You can also schedule two periods of English as long as you have a double period of Math the next day.

Brian: What do we do when we're not in our group?

Seth: Write in our process journals or our idea log, right?

Diane: You can say that louder, Seth. Yes. You can use class time for working on a piece, for writing in your idea log or in your process journal. But it's important that you talk to me or Sondra so we know what's going on.

Jeff: Do we have to stay here?

Diane: You can leave this room, but I want to know where you are going. I'd like most people to stay here or be close by. Also, we'll cancel this option the first time I hear something negative or you are seen where you're not supposed to be.

Chris: What about handing in pieces?

Diane: We follow the usual procedure. You hand in your first draft with the date on it to me. I will check it in, xerox it and have it ready for your group for the next day. It's my need to have it organized and orderly so you need to follow these steps, okay? Are there any other questions? Okay. You can write today or conference with me, Sondra, or a classmate.

I talk first with Nancy. Her theme is nonverbal communication. She talks about algebra and how the slightest movement in Mr. K's face frightens her. She's written a poem and wants to try an interior monologue. When I ask her if she's interested in reading what others have written on nonverbal communication and writing an essay, she tells me she has already been to the library and checked out some books.

Chrissy T looks perplexed. On her desk is a piece of notebook paper on which she's drawn a chart of the days of the week. She says:

Chrissy: I'm trying to figure out when to write, when to do my process journal, how to get the piece in for xeroxing and when the group will meet, also when will I be able to fit in revision and a second group and I'm only one person?

Sondra: Chrissy, the hardest part of all this for you will be not to worry too much about the schedule or about controlling the order and the pace. You know you can just keep writing and let the schedule take care of itself.

Chrissy: Oh, I can just do it one day at a time?

Sondra: Sure. Just say in touch with your writing group. [Visible relief.]

Karen shows me a new piece about a girl talking to her father. She asks, "Can I also do a dialogue and a diary entry?" S: "Sure." Karen: "Can I do more than that?" S: "Absolutely." Karen: "You know, this is the first time English ever helped me with communication at home."

Diane DeL.is excited about her twenty-page piece. She says,

Diane: I'm organized for my writing group. I have a twenty-page story and also an interior monologue from the guidelines. I've just decided to go through last year's writing folder and see if I have anything I want to use. It's funny to see how different I wrote.

Sondra: What do you think the difference is?

Diane: This year it's more real. I put my feelings in.

Sondra: Why is that?

Diane: Last year, I hated my process journal. This year I think it's different because of our discussions.

At the end of class, Diane gets up and interrupts us. "I'm thinking something. I'm not sure I should say it but I will. I think it's important to get off to a good start. I'd like to feel that there's a nice, productive atmosphere in here. Right now, I don't. It's not here now. I have the feeling people are thinking, 'Let's have a good time. It doesn't matter if it has anything to do with writing or my theme.' That scares me a little. That's what I'm thinking. Does anyone have anything to say, especially if you think I'm wrong?"

Everyone is quiet. After thirty seconds of silence, I speak. "The people I spoke with were serious, but I agree that there's a chaotic feeling in here today. Mike joins in: "My general area was noisy, but I was still able to write." Diane: "Look, maybe loudness is my hangup and I'm being too uptight. I need to know that classtime is being used productively. Okay?"

For the next three days (Wednesday 3/17, Thursday 3/18, and Friday, 3/19), kids meet in groups or conference with Diane and me. Diane records her conferences in her journal:

> March 17:
>
> Period 4, Tuesday: Talk with Leslie about what I had written in her journal. She was very sincerely surprised that Margaret ever thinks about her at all. We also talked about her piece and about the possibilities of using this real life situation with Margaret and her as the basis for a piece--talked about diary entries, etc. as possibilities. She has a positive attitude about trying it; also has lots of other ideas for pieces on her theme.
>
> English B: Very frustrating to talk with Chris and Matt Sq . Chriss H too. Chris C and Matt Sq were working on pieces that had been written already as first drafts trying to fit them into their themes. Chris' was about a husband and wife--the husband is killed in a car accident--she has had no experience that even remotely resembles it. She said she wanted to try it as a challenge just to see if she could do it. Matt Sq was working on a piece about a guy who escapes from jail. He repeats what Chris said about the "challenge." He was sitting close enough to hear my conference with her. Chris and I also talked about using her process journal more for planning and rehearsing. She gives lip service to it so I confronted her with, "As much as I say write in process journal you're sitting there saying, "No, I won't." She smiles and nods. I tell her that her stubbornness is only robbing herself of the experience of knowing what can happen if she tries it. Chriss H was a pain in the ass too. She had decided on trust as a theme but now wants to change it because it's too boring and there's not anything she could possibly write. Actually I guess that's true for her--someone who is not very truthful or very trustworthy. She does not want a theme that anyone else has--too common. I tried to explain that even if everyone had the same theme that the writing they did would each be individual and different. She argued against each suggestion I made. I suggested that she write privately in idea log or someplace about what was stopping her from settling on a theme that could produce some real writing. At the end of this period I did not feel very encouraged. I think it will take lots and lots of individual talks with kids to help them see that a theme is not meant to be limiting and to understand how to write real things without revealing more than they want to reveal.

Margaret called after I got home last night. She is experiencing some difficulty with writing. She has lots of ideas based upon the guidelines but anything she has started so far hasn't panned out. She thinks she needs to talk over how to write without revealing too much and also how to use various forms. It's an offer I made to her last weekend. So we'll get together today after school. That should be very pleasant. The three main writing-related issues that upset her were:

1. Not wanting to write real things because she didn't want to be upset and deperessed by them. (I argued that she had already experienced feeling better as a result of writing.)
2. Not wanting to "tell the whole world everything" about her--privacy.
3. That she is afraid she will not write anything that's as good as "Images." This fear of failure seemed to be the basis of all the difficulty.

About her difficulty in writing--something that I just told her on the phone is that she should trust herself that she will write when she can. It comes from within her. She can't crank it out like others unless she feels it.

One last wonderful thing from yesterday was Diane Del 's process journal. It had been a week since I had read it, and I was totally unprepared for the quantity and quality of what she had written. She handed in two or three pieces including one 20-page story. She wanted her process journal back so she could write more last night so I read it and responded after school and delivered it to her at basketball practice.

That about wraps up Tuesday. I was flying when I left school--feeling very up! Now this morning I have xeroxed pieces, gotten tapes reading for writing groups, had a conference with Chris in which we had a wonderful discussion about her responsibility in "The Incident," etc. Period 3 is almost over and I'm set for the class. Some kids will have a double period of Math today and double English tomorrow.

Thursday, March 18:

Love how this is going so far.

Last period 30 kids met in writing groups (10 groups meeting at once). I borrowed many tape recorders. Math class must have been very small. Just remembered that I have to listen to April, Karin, and Chriss--their tape from yesterday. April and Karin had some complaints about Chriss. Have to do that before next period.

I had the pleasure of meeting with Margaret, Diane and Brian since there was no one to conference with. We did Brian's piece about a race.

Now the tape.

SSR: Met with April, Karin and Chriss separately. Talked with each about their pieces--Chriss has a theme now: friends. She seems to feel okay about it. The tape wasn't as bad as April and Karin had said. Just sometimes when Chriss was inattentive. I handled it with Chriss by complimenting her on the quality of her responses and questions and telling her how important it was that she be there fully because she was very important in the group. I think she got the point and also felt good. With April and Karin I talked about using diary entries and/or letters as a form. Gave each several Interaction booklets to look through. I must meet with Matt Sq first thing tomorrow. He's floundering I think. Matt D also seems pained today.

Friday, March 19, Quick Overview:

English B: I met with Matt Sq and talked extensively about escape as his theme and some possible ideas. Gave him a copy of "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" as a model of how he might do a piece about a kid daydreaming in class. Also suggested an idea for revising an earlier piece about finding fool's gold. He liked both ideas and seems to be in better shape now.

Also talked with Matt D. Suggested ideas for revising his piece. I still don't think he's happy with his theme or with the piece on wrestling. He said all he could think about today was how hungry he was since he's not eating in order to try to make weight for a wrestling tournament tomorrow. How stupid is it for a 13 year old kid to starve himself to make a weight!

Also talked with Regina. She has numerous ideas, but doesn't write at home. I told her she'd have to.

English A: Matt H and I had long talk about the situation he's experiencing with John P and his brother and how to use that for a piece or pieces. Mainly I think he just needed to talk about what's going on. He's very clear about not wanting any adult intervention and I respect that.

Also talked to John B about how to do several diary entries that tell a story. John isn't setting the world on fire, but he's doing okay--much better than anyone thought he would.

Talked to a few others briefly.

For the next three weeks (3/22 - 4/6), Diane's English classroom becomes a workshop. Mondays are for class meetings. Everyone sits in a circle, Diane reviews schedules, makes announcements and provides models of forms students may want to use in their writing. On two occasions, students read essays, to acquaint themselves with various styles and techniques for essay writing.

Diane also puts a sign-up sheet on the wall so that writing groups can inform her quickly of their daily plans. The class begins to take on its own rhythm and only occasionally do we need to remind students about what to do:

> Diane: Yes, it's important for you to keep writing. You set your own schedule and inform us. Yes, we are treating you like adults in the summer writing project.
>
> Sondra: Yes, you need to be responsible for telling your group what you want from them. Particularly if you are stuck, you need to let your group know.
>
> Diane: Yes, you may end up spending an entire writing group session on one person's piece.

Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays become days for writing group meetings, for writing quietly in class and for conferencing. Students are diligent about getting themselves to Math, although they don't always want to. The latest joke is whether they can schedule writing groups instead of Spanish.

During this three-week period, parent-conferences occur, Diane does grades, I attach myself to a few writing groups and by and large kids write. Scott runs in, on March 26th, before the buses leave: "Mrs. B., I don't want to hand in my process journal. I need it for over the weekend when I work on my piece."

Instruction occurs primarily through dialogues, either individual or in small groups. Relationships among kids, between kids and me, between kids and Diane, and between Diane and me grow. Diane and I check in with each other at night, to compare notes, to review what happened during the day and to see if any adjustments need to be made in the week's schedule.

Diane, as usual, records her perception of classroom events and emerging problems in her journal.

> 3/25 Other Stuff This Week
>
> Magazine stuff seems to be going well. On Monday I talked about a few problems I had experienced the first week: needing to know what everyone was doing, process journals not being handed in, etc. I had put up wall charts--space for each person (including me) to write what we do each day. Also made up a sheet upon which writing groups schedule their class time. Also asked kids to indicate a preference of which day they would like to hand in process journal.
>
> One thing I wanted to do today but didn't was to sit down and take stock of where everyone is and see who is *not* succeeding with this so well. It's easy for me to think about Diane DeI , April, Karin, Kathy, etc., etc., and feel like this is going very well for everyone. [Diane is such a joy these days. When we see each other in the halls she gives me a special little smile that seems to say, "Isn't everything wonderful?] If I can tonight, I will assess the situation and be able to talk with "needy" kids tomorrow.
>
> I am stuck with the different ways in which kids work. Diane, for example, has written 5 or 6 pieces--she wrote them all last week. She works on them one at a time in her writing group. April has also written a zillion pieces, Kathy too, John P: even! Chrissy T feels guilty if she doesn't write every night and has tried to figure out an exact schedule for herself. Margaret and Nancy M. are two who provide a contrast--working on one piece to get it "right." No thought of the next piece, totally focused on this one. This makes me think of how much I have dealt with kids as though they were all identical, as though everyone could write a piece for Tuesday and another one for next Tuesday, etc. I really have never taken into account their individual differences.
>
> Earlier today (about 8 or 9 hours ago), you and I listened to Kathy, Nancy, and Chrissy on tape. Yes, it's impressive, *but* we shouldn't be surprised that *they* are. Hopefully this weekend I'm going to listen to every group. In a way I'm really afraid to do that. Afraid to find out how bad they may be.
>
> 3/26 English B Today
>
> Long talk with Matt D. about his piece. He returned from writing group (they had a double period scheduled) feeling very down about his piece. He said he was bored reading it. I said, "Matt could it be that this isn't really something that you want to write right now?" I reminded him of the things on his mind the day we did the guidelines and how he had forced himself to pick wrestling, *not* either of the #1 things on his mind. I talked about how the guidelines might have gone if he had picked either one

of those. He said he had done the guidelines WRONG. He felt so bad that I just wanted to hug him. So I suggested re-doing the guidelines on one of the other topics or in order to find a completely new theme. I gave him a teeny little notebook and 4 or 5 guidelines questions to do by himself over the weekend. Then we got into a discussion of his process journal. I think he had been talking with Chris or Diane. He felt that he was still doing it wrong. Such a pained look on his face. "All of this, everything up until now has been a waste of time." "Matt, nothing is ever a waste of time. You had to do all that before we could ever have this conversation. Therefore it's not a waste."

During class today, I talked with Greg and Christian and gave them feedback about their group (Billy was skiing). Also talked with Greg about that piece. Good discussion of group stuff. I think they were totally "taken aback" by my positive approach and my praise for the good things. Bad discussion of Greg's piece. As soon as it was just the two of us, he became very defensive. Probably because there was no "positive" foreplay. (Ha! Ha!) I guess maybe what was bothering him in social studies, could have stemmed directly from English.

English A: I had listened to 3 writing group tapes: those that I feared might be the worst: (1) Greg. Billy P, and Christ F; (2) Matt H, John B, and Matt Sq , and (3) Pam, Costanza, Tara, and Colleen. I listened to these tapes in the early morning. Much to my surprise, they weren't nearly as bad as I thought. The main problem is one of haste. Rushing through a piece. "Are you done? Are you done?" rather than carefully considering a piece, finding strengths, asking questions, etc. Another problem is one of not pursuing questions or points. "Why do the teachers become so nice all of a sudden?" (This is asked of John B. by Matt H.) "I don't know," says John. "Oh," says Matt. End of Discussion. The same thing happened in a discussion of Greg's piece wherein the main character does every coneivable drug, kills a man, and runs from the police--all because the girl he liked would not go out with him. Christian asks him why he had the main character do all the drugs and kill a person? "I don't know." End of discussion. You might be wondering how I could find anything good in the midst of such as this. To me the good part is that those questions were asked in the first place.

Sunday, March 28

I am in the midst of one of those obsessions--this one involves listening to writing group tapes. I'm listening to all that there are getting a real sense of how each group functions. While I listen I sort through papers, clean up areas of my room, etc. I listened to a lot yesterday, then took time to watch 1½ basketball games. Then back to the tapes. My joke with Ross is that I'm at the Commack Motel this weekend. (He had started that joke Tuesday afternoon.)

Also thinking about how to give feedback tomorrow. I can't really talk to all groups simultaneously and as nice as it would be to sit with each for a while and talk, I bet I couldn't meet with all of them in the available time. So I think I'll give individual feedback via a "form letter." I've been thinking anyway about the advantages of letting kids know "where they stand" with regard to number of pieces, process journal stuff, etc. So I think I'll compose a standard form-type thing with blanks in it and quickly do it for each kid.

My overall impression of writing groups is very positive. There are things to work on, but so far I'm impressed with the care and the seriousness with which they discuss each other's work.

Later Sunday Night

It probably won't be too long before you arrive. I still have two groups to listen to and I've only done a few of the letters. The worst group I've heard is Dyane, Regina and Patty. I put aside one of their tapes. Tim, Jim and Matt Seif are a close second.

Want to write down my list of things to do in class tomorrow.

1. Freewriting
2. Distribute letters (feedback about progress to date, writing groups, and process journals)
3. General writing group announcements
    - basically pleased
    - whatever isn't right is my fault; this hasn't been a priority
    - say what you *get*
    - ask author what he/she plans to do with the piece
4. Contemplations Deadline - April 5
5. Suffolk County Reading Contest - April 9
6. I won't be here Tuesday (MSSC)
7. Guidelines - Wednesday if anyone wants
8. Writing Group Schedule - don't forget
9. Share Essays - examples (xerox in a.m.)
10. Other? Problems? Questions?

THE LAST ENGLISH CLASS OF THE YEAR ENDS WITH FREE WRITING

The last English class. Kids automatically move chairs into a circle. Diane begins: Sandra and I were talking about how we needed to have everyone together today and have a final class, tommorow I anticipate lots of other things going on with the memory minute and the group will be larger. First I have a couple of announcements. You don't have to do the letter to self- only if you want to.

Who's going to 8th grade night? Everyone raises a hand except Matt. After we look at him, he says, "I'm just waiting for people to ask, "You're not going?". Of course I am."

Diane: I want you to make sure you hand in your p.j.'s. Normally, I would return your writing folder and p.j. to you. This year S and I want to keep everything. She needs it for her research.

S: That's right. When I'm writing next year and I say, for example, that you did interior monologues, I will need examples to show what you did. If it's alright with you, I'd like to keep everything, even some samples of free writing. I'll return everything when I'm finished with it.

Chris C: You can keep it. I wouldn't want it back.

S: Why not?

Matt: As you get older, it all seems like such babyish stuff.

S: Well, I'll be careful with it, in any case.

Brian: Are you really going to write a book?

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S: yup.

Brian: On us?

S: On how you learned to write this year.

Matt: Will you have a writing gp?

S: Yeah, I will. The ~~first~~ reader will be Diane but also the other teachers in our project.

Matt looks troubled: But that's bad.

Diane: Why?

Matt: Because Mrs. B knows what you are writing about. She knows us. She wouldn't be a good judge.

Diane Del jumps in: That's not right, she'd be the best judge because she's the only one who knows what S. is trying to say.

Matt: But that's the problem.

Kids: You need 2 writing gps.

S: That's right. I think the first and the best audience is Diane and you because it's about you. But I'll also need others who weren't here because I want other teachers to be able to understand it.

Diane then direct us to do some free writing. "Write about whatever is on your mind, this last day of class." After ten minutes, she calls us back. "Maybe we could break, come to a close."

As we come together, Diane begins: While writing I realized s.t. You know the last week of school is always hard for me. But it just dawned on me that you guys are going to have a book written about you. I don't think I need a book to capture everything, but this has been an incredible year and it's all documented. All of a sudden I'm in touch with the joy of the end of the year. We have alot to be happy about. I want to say thank you. I may even be able to go through the rest of the week without feeling miserable.

Now does anyone need more time to work on memory minutes? I bet S. could jog our memories if she read to us from the world's most complete set of notes.

S: Call out a day. The kids: 10, 37, 108.

I turn to Day 79 in my notebook and begin reading. The class ends with me reading and the kids listening and laughing.

From Diane's Journal:
Tuesday, June 22:

> I actually felt quite good Tuesday for our last class. I liked being with the whole group, talking about/hearing about your plans, hearing field notes from day 96 or whatever it was.
>
> One of the things I wrote in our few minutes of writing was the joy I felt that even on day 178 (?) kids will write in class when given the opportunity. What's that say about the power of writing?
>
> I also got very turned on thinking about a book being written about this year (An unusual way for me to feel about that), very full of love thinking of you and what you've meant to me, to the kids, to the things we've done, very much in touch with what a wonderful year it has been and how great the kids are.
>
> Why be sad? I write.
>
> And later I made a little progress report to the kids on how I was feeling and dealing with my end of the year sadness.
>
> English B was just as good with the added touch of Tim and the film. Very good to laugh like that. "Cute" discussion about who is the best w.g. for your book about the class...Matt thinking it should be strangers, Diane thinking it should be me and others who know what really went on.
>
> Do they have a sense of how special this year has been? How can they? It's only 8th grade year they have ever had.

Audre Allison — 11th grade

FIRST DAYS

It's the first day of school and everyone is writing. Shawn sits with his back to the room, feet up on the windowsill, notebook on his knees. Sue bends over her notebook, ~~at a corner table.~~ covering the page with her arm; Sandra sits upright and still, her back straight, only her pen moving as she writes. Other 11th grade students spread out around the room, some sprawled on the floor, others around the tables arranged, this morning, in a large open rectangle. At a small table at the back of the room, Audre, their teacher, is writing too.

The topics on the board, which Audre has suggested after a brief introduction to the year's work, are "Why writing is important" and "Why writing is not important." Students can write on either. "Write freely, as many thoughts as you can get down, I won't ask you to hand it in," Audre has said, "But I will ask you to share."

A student mutters to himself, "Because you — because you learn how to — you learn about — because you learn how to express yourself ..." Another stares into space. Three boys compare notes on cars in the parking lot. Two girls show each other what they have written, and laugh together. As the hum of conversation begins to swell, Audre looks up to say, "Let's quiet down so that I can write." The talk stops; everyone writes. The room is so quiet you can hear chalk tapping on the blackboard ~~of the~~ room next door.

After a while, when most students have put their pens down and begun to move around, Audre gets up and circulates, checking progress and answering questions. "Sure you could," she says to one student; "I want you to be honest." When nearly everyone seems to be finished, Audre asks the students to move their chairs around "so everyone can see every one else." Papers rustle as people put their writing together and prepare to read. "I'll start," says Audre, "even though I didn't get to write very much ..." She starts to read, "'Writing is important for many reasons ...,'" then stops to say, "but then I didn't like that, so I crossed it out. 'The ...,' but I didn't like that either, so I crossed it out. 'The magic of writing intrigues me — watching a pen scrambling across a page casting gems along the way --' I wrote 'dropping' first, then changed it to 'casting' — 'watching a pen scrambling across a page casting gems along the way) is a mysterious phenomenon -- How does it happen? Where does it come from and how do we dredge it up?'" She comments, "It's not really on the subject, but that's what came out."

She asks for volunteers to read next. No one volunteers. "You should call on people," says ________________ _________; "We all have things to say, but people are afraid that if they volunteer the others will think they have a swelled head." (CHECK Audre's J., Sept. 1982 for this.) Audre asks several students to read. Eventually Sue does, then a few others. -- "When something is hard to say, you can write it down." Students listen, smile, nod; when ________________ says, "Compared to everyone else's, mine isn't very good," Audre says, "Don't evaluate yourself like that. Just go on." Time runs out before everyone has read. From Audre's j.: "Wonderful day - all write."

By the second day of school, the students come in prepared to write. One of the goals Audre has shared with the class is "We are looking for ways to make writing easier for people." Today she asks students to think about what makes writing easier. "You've been a writer for a number of years," she tells them, "You know what's been helpful to you." In particular, she asks them to write about teachers' comments on written work. "What comments have teachers made that helped you to be a good writer?"

Again students spred out to write. "Get comfortable," Audre says, and comments that she herself can't write easily sitting too close to other people.

When most sutdents seem ready to come back to the group for sharing, Audre reminds them, "We are gentle responders;" we listen carefully and don't evaluate.

Today, she says, we will practice "say back." As each person reads, the person to the right of the reader will "say back" what he or she has heard.

Kathy starts. "Last year I wrote a paper about the pros and cons of smoking marijuana. The teacher wrote that I'd done it all wrong. There were red marks all over it. I never did understand what she meant; I think she just didn't agree with what I said." After reading, Kathy describes what she has read as "junk" and "slop." Audre reminds her, gently, "Don't evaluate."

Tina "says back" with a little help from Audre. Audre asks Kathy, "Did Tina get pretty much what you said?" Kathy says she did. Audre nods to Tina, who reads her own piece. "Last year my teacher wrote all over my papers. There were run-ons -- all kinds of mistakes -- I didn't understand what she wanted me to do. I think my writing got worse." Kris "says back," and we proceed around the room, reading and saying back.

Kris: "Every teacher wants you to write a different way; what's right for last year's teacher will be wrong for this year's. By the end of the year you write like the teacher."

John S:"I like the way I write. I don't want to change it. I don't pay much attention to teachers' comments -- sometimes I don't even read them."

Sandra finds teachers' comments more valuable than grades: "a sentence circled with a 'good' is helpful," and Shawn adds that comments on ideas are more helpful than those on grammar.

Kim: "It's discouraging to get back a paper all covered with red lines."

Kurt: "It gets me pissed off when I work hard on writing something and the teacher scribbles all over it with a red pen."

Suzanne says she often can't read teachers' handwriting. "By the time they get to me their writing is illegible. If the grade is good, I barely read the comment anyway; if it's not, I read it a little."

John C: "Teachers usually make a lot of corrections -- spelling, run-ons, punctuation, capitals -- even when the story is good."

Trish: "I'm usually told to be more specific. I start off good, but end quick."

Billy: "Teachers usually say my handwriting is sloppy."

Mike ~~Shanley~~ - ~~Sept. 10, 1980~~: "I really don't remember what exactly teachers have said in previous years. I only remember basically what they have said. Mostly they say that my imagination and writing is good it's my form of writing that is bad. For instance, I don't write very well in script. I am more comfortable printing; some teachers prefer that you write in script. I feel my writing is good although I write very sloppy when I write fast but altogether I'm confident about my writing. Granted it could be improved but it wouldn't my style be, you know."

Dave E.: "In the past, in other classes, the teachers never seemed to spend any time reading my writings. They sometimes jotted down a comment like O.K. or good or excellent or work on spelling. I suppose that they don't have the time to really "get into" reading a student's work but their comments always seem so impersonal; kind of like a computer readout. When I get a more individualized response from a teacher, it encourages me to work harder or to write better because I like to please people and I like to be told that I'm doing a good job."

Tom: "Teachers usually say my content is good, but they correct punctuation and form. I like to ramble ... I want to write without worrying about form ... I remember mostly the bad comments, not the good ones. Maybe there just were more bad ones."

Alicea: "I can't stand it when teachers read my story, then just correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Cause then it's not worth putting the effort into the story."

Dawn: "Teachers say I use run-ons. I forget to put in periods, because I get involved with the story I don't think to put in punctuation. Teachers get carried away when they start to mark punctuation."

______________________ agrees: "They get so involved in correcting punctuation they don't pay attention to what you're saying."

Tim: "Most comments are no good. The teachers didn't write it, so they don't know what you're trying to say, so they can't know if you've said it or not. It doesn't matter anyway, as long as you understand it yourself."

Allison: "I like it when the teacher helps me say what I want to say."

Walter: "Teachers say I repeat ... I am very rarely commented to about my originality or creativity."

Donna: "I don't remember anything anyone ever said about my writing."

Audre reads. "I really don't remember comments, I think I felt at ease with writing and more or less ignored what teachers said When I try to remember my teachers from high school, the only things I remember about them are the kind or nice things they did. Some who were extremely mean stand out in my memory as ogres, but the individual acts I don't remember. I know they didn't help me.

I do remember a teacher I had in college. I remember him well because he contested my criticism of Hemingway's Farewell to Arms. I was satisfied with what I had written."

She half reads and half tells a story about writing back to ~~a~~ the teacher -- arguing with his comments. Some students laugh appreciatively, and Audre invites anyone who wants to to respond to her comments on their work. "You ought to have a chance to respond to me; there's no reason I should have the last word."

Audre: "Not everyone of us made comments on what was helpful ... Try to think about what does help."

In her journal, Audre comments on the day's work. "Good writers sound as if they "own" their writing, poor writers are confused about who to please, how to please and seem more easily shattered by corrections. They seem to be saying that they try so hard to make it what the teacher wants and so - feel personally affronted by having errors pointed out. Good writers like what they write and more or less disregard negative comments - 'Well, I like it anyway.' May or may not take 'helpful' suggestion - Get more angry at teachers tha~~t~~n hurt."

By the end of the third day of classes, when everyone has written and read at least once, Audre's students are well launched onto a year of writing. They've put words on paper, some perhaps for the first time since last June. They've read their writing to an audience. They've begun to listen to one another's writing in a new way.

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In November, an irate citizen writes to the Community Journal, a local newspaper. Under the title, "Do You Know Where Your Teens Are?," the writer describes Wading River teenagers as gang members who spend their time "vandalizing and terrorizing our homes with cycles, litering and loitering," and continues, ". . . "Teens are riding our public roads and highways, breaking the laws we all have to abide by . . . Teen parties leave garbage, drink and are on drugs, vandalize and foul mouth community families . . . How many of you have been too scared to call [the police] when vandalized or terrorized by juvenile delinquent teenagers? . . . Where are teens on Rec. Night? Out wrecking the town . . . out wrecking small businesses and community and private properties. We should not be prisoners in our own homes, afraid to go out . . ." The letter continues in this vein for eleven paragraphs. It is signed "Name Withheld." &

The opportunity is too good to miss. Audre reads this letter to her students and, catching their indignation at its height, asks them to write in response to the questions: "How does this make you feel?" and "What do you want to say about this?" She describes this writing as "a searching" and "a rehearsal." Several students suggest writing back to "Name Withheld" or to the community, but "Don't make decisions about audience yet," Audre instructs the students; "not until after the search -- when we discover what we want to say."

They list possible audiences, for future reference:

1. "Name Withheld"
2. Editor of the Community Journal
3. Readers of the Community Journal (general population)
4. School Newspaper (student population - "teens")
5. A friend
6. Parents
7. Teen Rec.
8. "Cops"

Walter: "Can we really send these to the Community Journal? Make it more than a class project?"

Audre: "Of course. This is real."

Audre offers to xerox the "searchers" for sharing in groups the next day.

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Everyone writes furiously until the end of the period.

The next day, Audre distributes xeroxed copies and explains how the groups can use them. "This is not for correction . . . It's to help the writer zero in on audience and purpose. When you were writing freely, you didn't have to worry about audience. Now you will want to think about it . . . and purpose." She reviews the list of possible audiences and makes a new one headed "purpose." Students contribute:

1. Revenge
2. Convince people it's not true
3. Show another side

Audre: "The more you think about it and write about it, the more purposes you will find."

Students add:

4. Show that he/she exaggerated
5. Tell how you feel
6. Blame parents
7. Where do kids learn this behavior?

Students begin to read their "searchars":

Cumhur says: "I tried to think into the feelings of the woman who wrote . . ."

Audre: "Woman?"

An argument breaks out: Is "Name Withheld" a woman or a man? Sandra says the writer must be male: "Women are more compassionate." Steve M. says it must be a woman: "Men don't get upset about these things." Audre and I can't resist the bait and get into it too, asking students to examine the assumptions behind their assumptions. Dave H.: "I think an English teacher in school wrote it to get us to do this assignment."

groups meet to read ~~FIND SOME~~ FIRST DRAFTS ~~AND WRITE UP FIRST GROUP MEETINGS~~ (A)

Dear Mr or Mrs Name Witheld

I don't know where you get your information from or should I say misinformation. I am a teenager and I have lived in Wading River for 15 years I have never once experienced a motercycle run over my garden or chasing me across my lawn. Also I have never heard of a teen or anyone else maiming or killing anyone other than themselves while riding a minibike or motercycle... In reference to your "gangs !" as you call them I have seen groups of friends walking around but what would you expect every kid to walk around alone that's not possible there is and always will be cameraderie between all ages of people and just because there are a group of teenaged kids that you see walking along the road that does not indicate that they are off to fight a gang war... (Emil)

... In my opinion I feel that this letter is a little far fetched only because every teenager in Shoreham Wading aren't hoodlems and mad killers... And this person who sent the letter in is not to brave because she didn't sign her name to it. And I am sure when her children were young they were not perfect angles, as she claims them to be ... (Alicia)

...Isn't it a shame that all parents weren't as sucessful with chaild raising as Name Witheld. If all teenagers were as perfect as Name Witheld's, we'd have no problem here. Unfortunatley, the rest of us here is this community are human beings with human faults and a realistic outlook.

Teens are so busy all the time. They are in school for seven and a half hours, so that leaves sixteen and a half hours for them to concentrate on all of that destruction they are doing. If you take out 3 hours a day for the sports, in which we have championship soccer, cross country, golf, and gymnastic teams, that leaves 13½ hours for vandalization. They gobble their food, like true j.d.s and olny take a measly ½ hour to eat. That leaves 13 hours for all this vandalization. Of course they never study, all their grades are handed to them. We fear for Yale and Harvard and all universities large and small that we are sending our j.d.s to. They only sleep for four hours, not to take time away from their destruction. That leaves us with 9 hours full of vandalization by all teens.

We must applaud Name Witheld for a wonderful job in stereotyping an entire generation as lost cases. Well, scrap that group, we can always try again. (Kristen)

I think the article is a bunch of lies.... (John Y)

I think that the person who wrote the letter is making up the incidents himself.... (George)

My response to this writing is very negative. I am going against it. Because when you have a motorcycle and you are involved in racing you really have no other place to practice and ride. The person who wrote this doesn't know about serious riding.... (Steve M.)

... In my opinion your letter is slightly exaggerated. From a teen's point of view you sound as though you are against all teenagers. And that disturbs me very much ! ... The biggest gang I have ever seen in Wading River is a group of eighth graders walking to the general store for a bar of candy or a couple of sixth graders going to the ponds to feed the ducks.... (Lynne)

I can hear in your writing that you are bitter. The way you expressed your feelings,I feel was awful.... (Karen)

... You make it sound like the vandals are gangs of 4 or 5 with leather jackets, as the 60's, but gangs like those have ceased to exist.

You also calaim mini-bikes as deadly weapons, but how many people do you know that have been runned over by minibikes.

Parents also can't check where their children are every minute. We have to give them some privacy. How do we know that you guarded your children. Maybe they weren't Angels etihers. (Joe T.)

... If all these events happen as much as you say, we would need a separate jail just for Wading River teenagers.

If a cycle hit a fence or sign, as you say they do all the time, the cycle and the person driving it would be demolished.... It sounds like Wading River has a bunch of motercycle gangs going around having fights and destroying the town....

I think what you are saying is that all parents should go around with their teens on a leash and have them to bed by eight. (Chuck)

I think this artical is directed at teenagers my own age and violently effends me. ... If two mailboxes are destroyed in two weeks it is beleaved by people who live around the area this is a gang war or death squads on the prowl.

I had a motorcycle once and took it on the trails and sometimes even on the road but that was just to go to some other trail. I don't see how this endangers anyone except the rider who rides on his own risk. (Mike M.)

... You parents seem to label all teenagers as durgies, alcholics and destroyers. What about us good kids who don't do those things. ... You parents do a lot of yelling, talking and complaining.... (Rick)

A3

I think that the person who wrote this article is very misinformed, She has no references to back this up. Except for predjudices and personal beliefs. ... What you have here is garbage without the FACTS ! and no one will listen to what you have to say unless you get them.... (Walter)

In this article it becomes very apparent to me that the parent complaining is of a much earlier generation. Besides the fact that his/her children are already grown up, the writer's tone has the characteristics of a cranky adult who has nothing better to do than criticize our generation.... (Todd)

I've always thought that SWR was a peaceful town. Couple of incidents a year but nothing compared to some other L.I. towns. The kids here are not terrorists !

Though vandalism is a problem I think that extreme paranoia is a much bigger one. Since when do mini-bikes maim and kill ? Do all teens terrorize homeowners in their own yard. Do any ? What businesses have been wrecked ? I'd like to know....

This letter also attacks my parents, saying that they're irresponsible. No way. The person who wrote this letter obviously doesn't know my parents or my friends. (Dave H.)

Dear Witheld,

The exaggerated letter which the public has read is a fictional story written by a very creative writer .... (James)

Dear Unknown,

I'm not sure where you get your information from but I can't believe you live in Shoreham or Wading River. I can't help but have mixed feelings about you, a side of me feels extremely sorry for you... But another side of me says you have a very closed mind.... Now I'm sure some of the miner things you are saying is true, but we're not living in a dream world and there are a few troublemakers around, but as far as I can see we live pretty close to that dream place. (Eve)

I think this story was totally untrue. Not even half the things said about Wading River is the truth. Shoreham Wading River is one of the nicest, safest places to live in Long Island. The people (so-called teens) are really pretty calm. Shoreham schools give th students a lot more freedom then any other schools. They do that for a reason, becasue Shoreham people can handle that.... (Dawn)

Whoever it is seems to have a serious problem with stereotyping people.... I have news for you ! Adults leave garbage lying around, make noise and drink (much more than teens) and by the way alcohol is a drug.... (Dave E.)

A4

I think your letter is very unfair. You are giving ficticious information... My friends and I sometimes walk on the streets at night, sure. But we have a destination. We are not walking around as a gang looking to scare or hurt people. I am a normal person. I don't carry knives and chains. I don't have a car so how else could I get around this town ? I have never trudged through somebodies vegetable garden. ... (Tom D.)

. . . At the end of the period, Audre sends students home to revise their "searche~~r~~as" or (if they prefer to) to write new drafts, keeping audience and purpose in mind. She also asks them to write process on their revisions: what, how and why you revised.

The next day, Audre arranges the tables in a large open square and gathers the whole class around them. "What I'd like to talk about is how you revised— What helped you make decisions." She calls on Steve M., who says, "I changed it the way you told me." Audre, with a horrified expression,: "Wait a minute. Are you accusing me of telling you what to do with your writing?"

Steve: "Yeah. Well, sort of. You said - uh - about a word. I just changed it. You said you liked one part so I added more."

Kristen: "I kept the first and last paragraphs. I changed everything else. I wasn't satisfied with the first draft to begin with, but I had to hand it in for xeroxing. I changed it as soon as I could."

Audre: "Did anything your group said help you?"

Kristen: "I didn't like the way it sounded and they said they didn't either."

Audre registers dismay: "Is that what your group did for you?"

Other members of Kristen's group chime in: "She was wrong about . . . " " Some of it was sarcastic and some wasn't . . ."

Kristen: "Now it's all sarcastic."

Suzanne: "When I started my pre-writing, I wasn't sure. There was time pressure. I didn't know what I wanted to say."

She refers to her process entry:

> "I revised mucho because when I first wrote it, it really wasn't anything. It had no real meat. So I really wouldn't call this a revision, but a mere continuation. I changed the second paragraph because the idea was exactly what my point was, but it was said very unclearly. I think it's clearer now. When I arrived at the last paragraph, I hadn't finished what I wanted to say so I just expanded more and I threw in a one-line conclusion. Very often my conclusions are one liners, or two. Did you notice that? My paper is directed to the audience of the Community Journal. I want people to know that I am disappointed that a member of their community has offended many in his/her attempt to scorn vandals."

Audre: "What helped you decide what your point was?"

Suzanne: "I don't know. It just came to me."

Audre: "Can you pinpoint at all what led you to that decision?"

Suzanne: "I'm not even sure that's what I really believe. I'm sure somebody feels that way, but I don't know if it's me."

Suzanne's draft:

11c

"The recent View Point published in the Community Journal expressed a certain negative attitude towards teens and their neighborhood activities. Many SWR students have been offended. The author has made a serious generalization by stereotyping all young adults in this community. I am offended by these accusations, such as: vegetable garden destroying, foul mouthing adults or wrecking small businesses -- [none of which] has ever been a part of my weekend activities or nightlife. And I'm sure I have never caused mental disturbance or loss from work to any community member in this town. Also, I know many teens in SWR who can say this honestly. The article has been written in poor taste and without consideration to the many teens who are not involved in vandalism. Due to the faults of few, I do not deserve or approve of the label I am forced to wear because of such articles."

Todd (who has said earlier that he doesn't revise): "I had some sentences about 'all parents.' I realized that that's not fair either, anymore than 'all teenagers.' I was as guilty of making generalizations as the author of the article. So I changed those parts."

Audre: "You mean you revised? That's wonderful—That is, if that's what you wanted to do."

Todd: "My group told me it didn't relate to the article, so I went back to the article to make the relationships clearer."

Audre: "So your group helped?"

Todd: "They gave me a new direction."

Sondra: "I'd written the first draft for myself. Then I had to decide who else I was writing it for. I decided on 'the community,' but then I had to go back and change the whole first section. At one point, I couldn't decide between two words, so I left them both. I hoped the choice would be clearer when I read it again."

Kristen: "Yes. That happened to me, too. I'd addressed some of it to 'Name Withheld,' but not all. I had to go back and change it so it would all be to one audience."

Debbie: "I rewrote the whole thing. There was no connection between the first draft and the second."

Audre: "So you found a new way to write about that. Did anything your group said make a difference?"

Debbie: "When I listened to the others' letters, they were more descriptive, so I changed mine."

Audre: "So listening to other people's writing can help . . ."

Kathy: "I was reading my paper out loud and it just stopped. I felt stupid."

1-344

Audre: "So reading out loud made you aware of what you wanted to change?"

Kym: "My group told me to stress the satire more, so people would know it was a satire."

Audre: "You increased the exaggeration?"

Kym: "Yeah. I made it so exaggerated anyone would know."

Audre: "How do you feel about it now that you've revised?"

Kym: "I like it."

Kym's revised draft:

Wading River: A Criminal Town

"We better get out soon or they will be after us. Hundreds of them, just waiting for us to step out of our houses so they can destroy our property and annihilate us. We tremble at the sound of a car passing by, or footsteps on the street we live. Wading River: calm, peaceful Wading River has become a threatened place to live and there's no way out!

It was never like this when I was younger; oh, occasionally a war, but that needed to be done. We had to have peace and that was the only way to accomplish it. Everyone knew and actually loved each other and didn't think of vandalizing our neighbors.

These teenagers are becoming monsters and don't care what happens to others. They are like demons coming into our lives and we can't get them out. Their parents just want to get rid of them because these adolescents are too much to handle.

What has to be done? Someone needs to stand up for the rights of the people in this town; even though it's frightening . . . the risk has got to be taken. I'll be the strong one, the leader of the victims. I'll speak for us all and soon the battle will rage and we, the people who once knew this town as pleasant, will conquer!"

Debby: "My group liked one point especially, so I developed that. I added more specifics."

Audre: "It's true that being more concrete and specific often helps."

George: "I changed the whole thing completely -- put it in a different form."

Audre: "Would you read it?"

George: "No."

Audre: "Can you describe the difference? Even hold it up so we can see the difference in length?"

George holds up papers.

Audre: "You stretched it."

Juliet: "Mine is different. My revised draft is shorter than my first."

Audre: "What helped you revise?"

Juliet: "Myself. I wasn't in class for groups."

Audre: "Talking to yourself can be useful. I often think about writing when I'm doing something else like cooking dinner. I get wonderful ideas. Then I have to stop and rush off and write them down . . ."

"Who else revised? Eve?"

Eve: "You always pick on me... Did I revise? Sort of."

Audre: "How did you choose what to change? Can you show us?"

Eve: "Can we just skip it? Ask someone else."

Audre: "I want you to understand that this is very important to me. I want to hear how people revise."

Dawn says she has some more, but hasn't actually revised.

Audre: "Part of becoming a better writer -- or the best writer you can be -- is to have some discipline about it. You wanted to revise. You had ideas, but you didn't. What stopped you?"

Walter: "I expanded my first response. I added more of the facts, not just my personal opinion. People aren't going to listen to someone who gives only opinions and no facts. That's what 'Name Withheld' does."

Audre: "Did anyone in your group help you with your paper?"

Walter: "Yeah. Dave was the one who pointed out that the writer didn't support her generalizations."

Audre: "Her?"

Dave H.: "I got a good idea last night."

Audre: "Where did you get it?"

Dave H.: "A bolt of lightening hit."

Emil: "My group said I should keep it the way it was. That it came out right the first time."

Audre: "Why do you think that happened?"

Emil: "They said you could tell I was mad — that came through. If you write your real feelings, how can it be wrong? ~~It takes~~ . . . Br
It takes guts to put your name at the bottom."

MORE

PROCESS

When I wrote the response to name witheld. There was an angered tone to my first draft which I was trying to supress. I think I was mad at name witheld because they got away with a "cheap shot" let alone publishing false stereotypes and lies. (Dave E.)

When I had reread my letter I saw many points which confused me a great deal. I felt that I was sliding off the track of vandalism in Wading River. I began to write about vandalism in New York City. After I changed this my letter seemed very clear and to the point. (Tina)

In my first draft, I was too agitated after reading the article that I accused an individual. Its not that I changed my mind, but I felt if I wtote it different more people could like it. (James)

Today I wrote while babysitting, the ultimate atmosphere for stimulation. A cat clawing at me and a boy who could shriek at any moment. ... I don't find the topic that difficult yet I would prefer a story. ... crumbled pages litter the table...I continue. Then using the same technique I often do I slam the notebook and hope that when I look at the paper once again some sort of magic wand will have struck it.

(Sandra)

12

The class ends with a brief discussion of deadlines.

Audre: "You have to bring in something tomorrow. If you can't revise, write process about why you can't. That may get you going again."

She adds that tomorrow we will decide which letters are best, and why; and choose some to submit to the Community Journal and/or the Wildcat Pause, the school newspaper.

From Audre's journal:

> Good, perhaps final drafts of letters due. Today I'll try asking kids to consciously note and verbalize what it is that effective letters have ? What are its qualities ? It is one step to actively listen and enjoy or not, but a second step is to know why ? -- what did the writer do that affected you -- and a third step -- to describe the response it evoked in you. This takes such practiced concentration. ...
>
> he next day:
>
> Good groups get stuck on choosing [the best letter] -- good sign -- They are all happy with what they've written. I say -- forget choosing -- You'll be asked to read one or two letters aloud, but see if you can identify qualities that all or some possess. Do they have any qualities in common ? If not -- what are the qualities of each. This makes them more comfortable and I've learned something valuable. Perhaps these kids really do own their writing -- I think so. ... In Sandra's group they finally decide that although each letter has qualities -- that perhaps Sandra's might be best for the newspaper because it sounds so intelliegent and hearing from an intelligent voice would impress upon the community that there are really serious, nice kids here. Sandra immediately defends Sue's paper as being equally "intelligent" but Cumhur helps make the decision to read Sandra's to the class. ...

Of the letters submitted, five are published: Todd's, Kristen's, and Tim's in the Community Journal, Sandra's in Wildcat Pause, and John's in both. (See next page.)

To the Journal,

Recently the Journal published a letter entitled, "Do You Know Where Your Teens Are?" This dealt with vandalism and today's teens, and the author was less than compassionate. Rather, he or she unconscionably slandered an entire sector of society.

Granted, mangled mailboxes and broken beer bottles are not rare sights these days. Little insanities seem to be almost everywhere and we in upper middle class suburbia are not exempt from their presence. One can not deny that it is more than frustrating to see mauled property. Such anger, prompted a Wading River citizen to voice his/her opinion in your newspaper. This letter is blatantly caustic and openly attacks the community. The anger in which those words were written is understandable, yet the proclamations and generalizations take unfounded liberties in what is clearly undaunted prejudice, condemnation, and stern pessimism.

The author finds it his or her place to denounce an entire generation. The loud senseless examples of a few are taken, and the guilt thrust on all. The author finds it easy to forget the overwhelming majority who have never taken part in, "teen wrecking and terrorizing," rather he or she chooses to think of us all as delinquents rampantly roaring our motorcycles, with a knife in one hand and a joint in the other. The letter neglects to mention the brilliant athletes, talented musicians and promising scholars. It is forgotten that in the next decade we will become the young doctors, policemen and senators. Contrary to this, the letter dwells on and exploits the negative, claiming that these pointless acts are the trademark of our generation.

Shoreham-Wading River is overflowing with teens who have yet to ride a motorcycle through someones yard, on the contrary, the town has a multitude of students withs promising futures. How any one voice can be so staunchly condemning will always cause me wonder. I do not think I will ever understand why someone would choose to protect the negative aspects of a generation while almost intentionally tuning out the positive.

Like generations before us we are less than perfect. Yet time and understanding will be imperative, as we are gradually initiated into the adult society. "Name Withheld," gives us none of this. I earnestly hope that he or she, does not speak for the community as a whole.

By Sandra Kroeger

1-349

In response to an editorial
in the Community Journal

Dear Name Withheld:

Your letter opened my eyes to a lot of activities going on in the Wading River area. In fact, you placed me and a lot of other innocent bystanders into a group of people who engage in these activities. Maybe you never thought we would resent being placed in such a group. Or, maybe you thought none of the teenagers in Wading River were innocent bystanders. If this is the case, you thought wrong.

The "terrorizing" and "vandalizing" teenagers of which you speak belong to small group. I doubt that this small group has made Wading River residents "prisoners of our own home."

Teenagers "drink and are on drugs." Thanks again for generalizing the the whole for what a part is responsible for. I guess the question in my mind about your letter to the Journal is: How do you know? Have you analyzed each and every one of us to find out these things?

"Wrecking, terrorizing, and vandalizing." These are the words you use to describe the activities of every teenager on the weekend or on free time. Then, out of nowhere, you bring up the topic of dogs running loose. May I ignorantly assume that you have placed us in the same category as stray dogs? I'm in worse shape than I thought.

You neglect to mention all the good that the teenagers of this community have contributed. You neglect to mention the students from the high school and middle school who give up their own time to visit nursing homes and other places where their help is counted on and appreciated; the many hundreds of students who participate in interscholastic sports and other activities which encourage self-improvement and self-confidence seem to have conveniently slipped your mind.

What about the recent cross-burnings? You seem to think that all the acts you mentioned were committed by teenagers. Cross-burnings are a thing of the Ku Klux Klan, an organization that does not largely consist of teenagers. How can we know if this crime was committed by kids, or racist minded parents in the community?

Teen Rec. does its best to keep people out of trouble. The organization was formed by the request of parents in the community? They are not to blame.

Finally, I ask you to think about my comments next time you want to lash out against the teenage population of the community.

John Squillante

tudents at Shoreham-Wading River High School and are in response to "Do You Know Where Your Teens Are?" (The Community Journal, November 14, 1981.)

Response to a Viewpoint

In a recent edition of The Community Journal, an article was published addressing the problem of teenage vandalism in our community. The writer remained anonymous, and with good reason.

Teenagers are often society's scapegoat. The article exemplifies the fact that when there is turmoil the adolescent often bears the blame.

The writer states that teens are "wrecking and terrorizing the town," vandalizing, littering, loitering, using drugs, and even destroying vegetable gardens. The problem of dogs roaming the neighborhood has even been associated with teenagers. How can our responsibility for that possibly be justified?

Even the media and press seem to emphasize the downfalls of teenagers, leaving the many good aspects of a unique generation hidden behind shadows. Why isn't the stress placed on the academic achievement, athletic accomplishment, or community service of today's teenagers?

SWR Teen

Dear Name Withheld:

In your recent letter to The Community Journal, you wrote a letter to the people stating that the people of Wading River will not stand for terrorist acts any longer. You accuse teenagers and parents alike of some very serious acts.

I'm a sixteen year-old student at the Shoreham-Wading River High School. I stand behind you 100%. Many kids in my class responded to your letter saying that you exaggerated. I can only shrug this off and try to forget the days when I was a vandal. I was fourteen years old at the time, a heavy marijuana and alcohol user. I was in a gang called "The Maanz." We would go out every Friday and Saturday evening with intent to get wasted and vandalize everything in sight. I feel ashamed to say that I totally wrecked Wading River real estate, mailboxes, signs, and everything in my path.

That was two years and three arrests ago. I've turned myself around. Recently some teenagers painted some vulgar things on an elderly couple's fence. When I saw the elderly woman re-painting it, I immediately stopped and aided her. My friend and I painted the fence free of charge.

Wading River, like many towns, has its vandalism problems, but I hope the kids who vandalize will soon realize that it isn't cool and will start helping to make Wading River the beautiful town it ought to be.

Shoreham-Wading River Teenager

In response to Name Withheld:

There definitely is a problem with some teenagers, but it is unfair to judge a group by the actions of a few.

I am a teenager, but I do not ride a minibike, I have not egged houses and I have not terrorized anyone. That is not to say that I have not been victimized.

My father's car has been [illegible] and firecrackers have been thrown into our window. These actions, while being dangerous, do not scare me; they just make me angry. Still, that does not cause me to condemn everyone from ages thirteen to nineteen.

I am a teenager; I know teenagers. I know it is but a small minority that cause trouble. It is my conclusion that these few need professional help so that they can become a productive-rather than destructive-part of our society.

High School Student

How many hours do parents really spend per week with their teenagers? Isn't it a shame that all parents aren't as successful with child raising as Name [illegible] ect as Name [illegible] we'd have no [illegible] rtunately the rest [illegible] nity is full of human [illegible] uman faults and a realistic outlook.

Name Withheld seems to possess unbelievable perception. Those minibikes and cycles are wonderful toys. They keep teenagers occupied and out of their parents' way for hours on end. They are the best thing since TV was invented. There are a few underprivileged teenagers who don't have a minibike or cycle so they can't destroy vegetable gardens, speed and run down owners on their own lawn.

We must applaud you, Name Withheld, for your wonderful job

(continued on page 6)

Smith Estate

ontinued from page 1)

the Town of Brookhaven.

Around 1790, William Smith, a great-grandson of the original patentee, Colonel William Tangier Smith, established a homestead in the northerly section of the original patent, which was designated Longswamp and later given the designation Longwood.

Sometime shortly after 1823, William Sidney Smith took control of Longswamp (Longwood) and spent the remainder of his life at this site

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LEGAL

RESOLVED, that pursuant to Section 64(11) of the Town Law, the News Review, Suffolk Life, The Long Island Traveler Watchman, The Wading River Community Journal, and The Sun, be and hereby are designated as official newspapers for the publication of all notices, resolutions, ordinances, and other matters required by law to be published for the Town of Riverhead for the year 1982 and the Town Clerk shall publish therein only at the direction of the Town Board, and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the News-Review is hereby designated as the official newspaper of the Town of Riverhead.

STATE OF NEW YORK,
COUNTY OF SUFFOLK ss.:
TOWN OF RIVERHEAD,

THIS IS TO CERTIFY that I, the undersigned, Town Clerk of the Town of Riverhead, County of Suffolk, New York, have compared the foregoing copy of A resolution with the original resolution now on file in this office and which was duly adopted on the 5th day of January 1982, and that the same is a true and correct transcript of said resolution and of the whole thereof.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and the official seal of the said Town of Riverhead, this 6th day of January 1982.

s/Irene J. Pendzick
Irene J. Pendzick
Town Clerk

SEAL

The Battle of Bunker Hill was unique in that thousands of spectators in the Boston area had ringside seats for the spectacle. They sat on rooftops, in treetops, on church steeples, and in the rigging of the ships in the harbor.

Where the Teens Are

(continued from page 3)

in stereotyping an entire generation as lost cases. Because of your keen insight, we can save ourselves from wasting the next twenty or thirty years of our lives trying to better the youths. Well, scrap this generation, we can always try again. Better luck next time.

Outraged Teen

Dear Name Withheld,

Your letter opened my eyes to a lot of activities going on in the Wading River area. In fact, you placed me and a lot of other innocent bystanders into a group of people who engage in these activities. Maybe you never thought we would resent being placed in such a group. Or, maybe you thought none of the teenagers in Wading River were innocent bystanders. If this is the case, you thought wrong.

The "terrorizing" and vandalizing teenagers of which you speak belong to a small group. I doubt that this small group has made Wading River residents "prisoners of our own homes."

Teenagers "drink and are on drugs." Thanks again for the generalizing the whole for what a part is responsible for.

You neglect to mention all the good that the teenagers of this community have contributed. You neglect to mention the students from the High School and Middle School who give up their own time to visit nursing homes and other places where their help is counted on and appreciated. The many hundreds of students who participate in interscholastic sports and other activities which encourage self-improvement and self-confidence seem to have conveniently slipped your mind.

Granted, some of the acts you mention do happen in some communities. But I can't help but think that possibly because you were a victim of one of these acts you mention, that you may be exaggerating the extent of these crimes.

What about the recent cross-burning? You seem to think that all the acts you mentioned were committed by teenagers. Cross-burnings are a thing of the Ku Klux Klan, an organization that does not largely consist of teenagers. How can we know if this crime was committed by kids, or racist minded parents in the community?

Teen Rec. does its best to keep people out of trouble. The organization was formed by the request of parents in the community. They are not to blame.

Finally, I ask you to think about my comments next time you want to lash out against the teenage population of the community.

John Squillante

Letters, Opinions...

A recent letter, "Do You Know Where Your Teens Are?" printed in the *Community Journal*, draws responses from students:

VIEWPOINT:

How many hours do parents really spend per week with their teenagers? Mine are grown up and I must admit, never have they done the mischievous vandalism we have endured here in Wading River.

There are many hours spent in the neighborhood by teens vandalizing and terrorizing our homes with cycles, littering and loitering. Mini-bikes and cycles are bought for teens; they keep the kids out of the parents' way. These machines are weapons and can maim and kill. They are unregistered, uninsured and driven by very inexperienced teenagers or juveniles who harass the public.

The noise and dust and damages are caused to citizens on their own properties by these cycles and mini-bikes. Teens are riding over public roads and highways, breaking the laws we all have to abide by. Vegetable gardens have been destroyed, (no apologies nor compensation from the parents were ever made, for the damages caused by juveniles riding cycles).

The responsibility is the parents' too. Teen parties leave garbage, make noise, drink and are on drugs, vandalize and foul mouth community families from their own front and back yards. We may be the first to speak up and fight back, but it's got to stop somewhere! We have town fathers and police, who are there to answer our many calls to them for help.

How many of you have been too scared to call them when vandalized or terrorized by juvenile delinquent teenagers? They are never put on report! Fences and signs have been demolished by cycles and teens. Now the law requires parents to pay for the damages, did you know that?

Where are teens on Rec. Night? Out wrecking the town. Not all of them are at Teen Rec. night, do you ever call to check where your teens are? They are out wrecking small businesses and community and private properties. We should not be prisoners of our own homes, afraid to go out and leave the house for a while.

How many times has your mailbox been destroyed? Mail is not to be tampered with! Sign destruction, fence wrecking, bikes speeding through gardens, running down owners on their own land, the "Clean Air" law is dust from cycles. Raw eggs are thrown on private signs and private property even before Halloween.

What's happened to our laws? Dogs run loose, littering and loitering, bottles are everywhere. We are tired of cleaning up!

The terrified residents are afraid to speak up for their rights. They have been and still are terrorized by the teens and their gangs. This has been going on too long and ignored too long. Batteries have been stolen from cars and yards, windshields busted. How would you like the gangs walking through your back and front yard daily and foul-mouthing you as they did?

Something has to be done about the teen wrecking and terrorizing here in town. It cannot and will not be ignored any longer. The inconveniences caused by unsupervised juvenile offenders and their parents' lack of responsibility or caring about what they do or where they are, is inexcusable.

This has caused us time and money, mental disturbance, doctor bills, loss from work and it's about time the help we are pleading for so long, is no longer ignored, we have rights and feelings too! Thank you for your time.

—Name Withheld

NOVEMBER "PLACE" PIECES

"We need a change of pace," Audre tells me in mid-November; a break from the small-group work which, for some ~~reason~~ students, has begun to drag. "I want to get the whole class back together again ~~and~~ play some games, ~~in~~ be a community." [Check ~~with~~ this with Audre.]

On November 17, a Tuesday, she arranges the tables in a large open square and gathers the students around her. "The sentences that open stories are often packed with meaning," ~~and~~ she says. "When you're younger you start most stories the same way: 'One time, my father and I . . . ,' but when you really begin to craft, the beginning gets to be very important." She reads the opening sentences of "~~The~~ Too Early Spring," "The Fall of the House of Usher," and [?].

"William O. Douglas nearly lost his life on a mountain," she says. "How do you think he starts his account of the experience?" There are ~~queries~~ guesses: "One time I nearly lost my life . . . ," "The most important experience I ever had . . ." Audre reads: [description of mountain; get exact quote].

"What I want you to do now is think about a place ... Close your eyes ... Think about a place that has some significance to you. Now take a pencil and write one sentence that might be the opening line of a piece about that place." Everyone writes for a few minutes; then

Audre asks for volunteers to read what they have written. No one volunteers. She calls on students, going around the room. As the students read, Audre: responds: "Gosh! ... Intriguing ... Is that going to be a scarey place? ... I bet that story is going to be about a deer hunt ..."

~~Kerr~~ Kurt: "Sorry to disappoint you. Mine is very short." Audre: "Several of the ones I read were short. That's fine." Every so often she stops to say, "These are great opening sentences--I love them!"

When her ~~time~~ turn comes, Audre reads, "In the winter the urine froze in the chamber pot under ~~one~~ our bed as we lay snuggled in down listening to the voices of the adults in the parlor below, but in the summer we climbed through the windows and perched in the walnut tree to spy on them." There are several snickers at "urine," especially when it turns out that Cumhur doesn't know what it means. Someone gets a dictionary for him; someone else whispers in his ear; Cumhur blushes, and there is friendly laughter around the room.

Audre: "We're going to make up a story together, each person adding a line, starting with one of these openings. Whose shall we pick?" Several voices: "Yours!" Audre starts, and the story, beginning slowly, builds up steam and continues, though with halts now and then and gaps in continuity, until the 10-minute bell and today's usage test.

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The next day, Wednesday, Audre tells students, "We are going to write in class today. You can go back to the place you wrote about yesterday, or choose a new one--as long as it's a place you can write about in your own real voice. You don't want to sound like a recorded announcement from the phone company: 'That will be 25 cents, please ...'

"Take out a piece of paper ... Relax ... Close your eyes. I'm goingto take you on a guided tour of your place. We're going to try to loosen up, see things from a different angle. This will be a prewriting, ~~and~~ When I expect you to explore--really stretch out--find a fresh way of looking at something. We're looking for something that strikes a spark.

"You can listen to me ... or drop in and out ... I'm going to ~~drive~~ drone on ... You can take notes ... I want to see everyone writing. Right now, though, close your eyes ... No one will get you, John. Close your eyes so that you can see this other place. In your minds, go to this place ... Look around and see everything, see everything that's there. Look up, look down, look very carefully ... See and feel the time of day ... What time of year is it? Winter? Take a deep breath and feel the quality of the air ... What do you smell? ... You can start writing ...

"Now, listen! What do you hear in this place? Listen very carefully ... Is it a loud noise you hear, or are you listening ~~in~~ to silence? ... Stay there for a while ... How is your mood affected by being there? ... Imagine you've been there for a whole year ... Tell how it might have made you better ... Now tell how being there might have made you worse ... Now imagine that you're a tiny little animal ... What do you notice that human beings don't notice? ... Now, as this tiny little animal, what do you think human beings notice that you don't? Now--here comes someone. Who is it? Who do you see there? ...

"What weather seems just right for this place? What weather seems completely out of character--absolutely wrong? What mode of transportation seems right for this place? A rocket? Horse and buggy? Scooter? Now imagine you're someone who thinks this place is absolutely beautiful. Describe it ... Now someone who thinks this place is ugly. How would you describe it? Someone who thinks it's boring ...

"What are the colors you think of? Bright? Electric? ... Imagine that your body is the world ... Where on your body is this place located? ... Make up a slogan, or saying, or proverb that the inhabitants of your place would use ... Just continue writing ... "

Aside from a few snickers at "smell" and "body," the students have been quiet, writing, and listening to Audre's questions. When Audre stops questioning and begins to write herself, they settle down to writing and continue until nearly the end of the period. When Audre, apologizing for interrupting them, asks them to stop and write process.

At the very end, she asks a few students to share either their process entries or what they've written so far. Suzanne ~~reads~~ has written about her room:

Prewriting:

> Snow on trees blends in with white walls. The whole room is eliminated. Smells like a dirty shag rug. When the shades are down it's like a dungeon. In the moring hear the birds outside the window, the cars on 25-A going to work. At night there is silence.
>
> Mood: incredible thinking good
>
> Room grows. Maybe it's not a room any more, it's part of the outside. Little animals, so many objects in the skirts of room and huge field in the middle.
>
> No one is ever here. Just me. Another person--mother-get~~s~~ this place fixed up. There is so much crap.
>
> What she doesn't know all this crap makes up the special feeling I get in this room.
>
> Winter is my room, this place reminds me of walking on a path in a field with weeds, tree stumps along side.
>
> Beautiful place, open, room to room, everything in place yet somethings want to be in place.
>
> Boring boring. Everything in same place. Can't find easily.
>
> Exciting. Creates different mood than most rooms, freedom, yet in a closed room.
>
> ——> [Beginning of piece ~~starts~~ here:] My room is an interesting place to visit. The walls are white with a four-colored rainbow streaked across each wall and angled on the ceiling in a never ending never beginning circle. The ceiling is powdered blue, sky colored, with fluffy white clouds arranged randomly across its high surface. In each corner [use rest of this?]

She adds a process note:

> ~~Overall process:~~ I would like to mention that the way you got the class writing was the best way for me to start: By having you speak of different things, many original ideas come to my mind. It's very hard to start from scratch, but you set the mood very well. And overall I think it gave everybody in the class a direction. I stuck with my main description of my walls and after many times of rewriting sentences I discovered a theme or reason. It really took me a while though.

Kristin's process:

> When we started yesterday, we had to think of a place. In my mind I had had an image. It was of the room in my grandmother's house that I used to sleep when we stayed in Maine. It was more a definite feeling I had then a thought. I could smell the warm night, hear the sounds and just got the feel of it. When you said write about the place, I didn't think I could put this feeling into words, so I picked a nice, easy, general topic.
>
> Today, as I sat here I imagined the same setting. I just wrote words and snatches of things that came to my mind. This room especially reminded me of the 4th of July, so I started to write of the feelings I had when I was considered too young to go to see the annual fireworks display. As I thought of the show itself, I started to envisage it and sort of changed from topic to describing that.

Kim D. writes about the beach, and then:

> I wrote the first paragraph of this piece in class. I really liked it and decided to keep on with it. As we continued to write, Ms. Al~~win~~ read things aloud. It gave me ideas and lots of ideas. I described it so well, I thought I never could. I loved the piece. I couldn't believe that I wrote it myself.

Audre, in her journal:

> Tried an Elbow ~~[illegible]~~ exercise and had an enjoyable day watching everyone writing, completely engrossed. I had intended to have them write for about 20 minutes, then stop and share, but since they were furiously writing, I didn't stop them until about 5 ~~mn~~ min. before the end of the period and I was pleased with results shared by Sue, Kristin, and Cumhur. I hope all the concentrated writing is an indication that they were able to get something going that pleased them. Tom wrote for the whole period, who usually chats nonstop. Third period did as well. It is a most wonderful feeling to be in a classroom with 24 brains clicking and pens and pencils moving nonstop--furiously across a sheet of paper--electrifying.

1-359

The following Monday groups meet on ~~the~~ 1st composed drafts, xeroxed. Audre reviews steps for group work. "Once you understand what these steps are for, then you don't have to have such a rigid approach. Until then ... "

~~The following Monday~~ Dave E. has written about his summer at Lutheran Youth Camp. He reports, "When Ms. Allison asked, 'Where is the light coming from?' I thought, 'The light is from the faces.' I saw the faces of my friends clearly in my mind. I made a list of their names and started to write."

Prewriting:
(distance
+ separate
[illegible])

Beginning draft:

> Rich, Maryanne, Sue, Lorraine, Sean, Wendy, Allan, Pastor Babs, Gwen, Ronnie, Patricia, Kim, Sheligh, Steve, Patty, Trina.
>
> It is a place where people go to for rest and relaxation but there is opportunity to hike, fish, swim, paddle, or row.
>
> It is on a large piece of rural property with a lake and stream and perhaps the most evident thing here is invisible. In the midst of nature at its best are people living with each other and nature, and God, a harmonious life with much satisfaction and with each day a growing feeling of belonging. There are so many friends to make. So many people depending on you, but that is what life is about, people depending on each other. I never knew how intricate and complicated a human is. I never knew that I'm not the only one who has feelings. I learned that it is possible for people to live hand in hand with God and still be vital, effective individuals. I have found the key to a long and satisfying life. I understand some thing that the wisest person is baffled by.

Group members comment that the names Dave listed didn't get into his piece, "and you haven't told us about them. What happened at camp that made you feel that way? Did you go on hikes? Did everyone live in the same place?

Rizer (21)

~~Quick lines for Nov. "place" piece~~

the light comes from the people

Rich
Maryjane
Sue
Lorraine
Jean
Wendy
Allan
Pastor Bob's
Gwen
Ronnie
Priscilla
Kim
Shelagh
Steve
Betty
Lena

Its such a perfect place

Satisfaction Unity

Love for People & Nature

(Too those getting tired of being there too long

animal-love & Respect for nature

Animals & people together - understanding

Sunny beautiful - birds sing. Deer run free and alongside of people

rain is out of place snow is in place there

exciting. lots of people, love, nature, but time to be alone

Note
Everyone is nice
there are no
[illegible], I can't
be so open
[illegible] are [illegible] for miles
Boom [illegible]

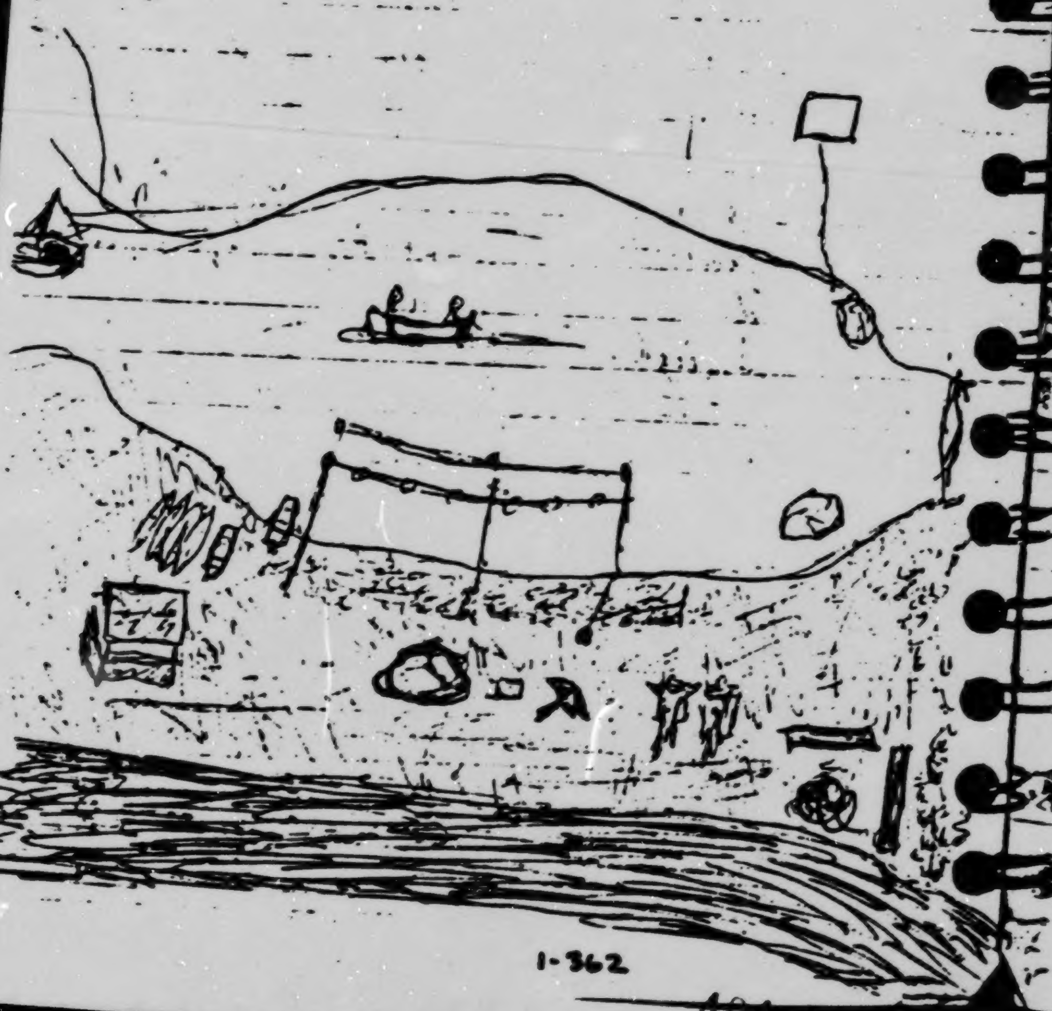
Insert

2

colors
green
blue
yellow
black
red
white

Part of body - ~~head~~
liver
heart

Slogan: go to Koinonia; Meet God
and yourself



It is a
go to for
is opportunit
saddle or
It is on
property
and perha
here is
of nature
living to
and natur
life will
with each
belonging.
to make.
on you.
about, pe
I never ka
complicated
~~valuj know~~ that
who has p
possible for
with God a
individuals.
a long, an.
understand so
person is

What else do you remember?" They are interested; they underline "the most evident thing here is invisible" and "how intricate and complicated a human is," and "living hand in hand with God," they ~~and~~ want to know more. Dave, "Once I got to know the people, I found myself overlooking their faces; I saw behind them." B-r ~~He~~ tells about camping, and says he will add to his piece.

Sandra reads a piece she describes as "not very good" about an ice hockey match.

> ... They had come by the thousands, clutching their tickets. Lights glared brilliantly throughout. Hair styles showed that they had spent the day beneath woolen caps. Young children sat glassy eyed. Styrofoam caps of coffee were devoured as the steam reddened winter cheeks. Mothers were being pestered for small change. Cameramen hustled about. Yet it was the scoreboard and the fogged hockey floor which captured all eyes....
>
> Time waned. The game became tense. Even the weariest of eyes became hypnotized by the action on the ice. The boots thundered on the cement, keeping time with the entrancing chant, "U.S.A.!! U.S.A.!!" It took only a black puck at the stick of an American to send thousands cheering. Smiles blanketed faces as the men in R.W.&B. took a lead. Cameras flashed, hands clapped. Flags waved. My neighbor asked, "Where're y'all from?" We talked. He was from Texas and we were friends.
>
> The green lights of the scoreboard flashed only minutes to go. Children threw popcorn. Frisbees soared through the stands. Strangers danced. Neighbors embraced. We were all friends ...

Group members laugh at "He was from Texas and we were friends." "Don't change a thing," they say, "You've caught the feeling of the match."

13<sup>

Cumhur opens his notebook to a long piece. Sandra: "Everybody sit back." Cumhur: "Everybody ready to get bored." He starts:

I love the East Black Sea. When I go there I change. I feel better, I feel different. It seems to me that there is not any time limit in my land. When I look back to my childhood, it's hard to realise how many years have passed, but as I remember those years I live them again.

Life is a continuous, working chain there. Your world is made up of your family, house, fields, farm, and town. An endless motion without any hurry. (As I said, it seems that there is always enough time. This effects me very much, may be this is the most important part that I like.) A world where you can live in peace with your family, with your surroundings, and know how to work to be happy with what you have.

Close to sunset with the bright but half warm lights of sun, I hear the rushing of the river far away, effecting me deeply. I smell the odor composed of soil, various ripe fruits, and smoke from the houses as we return home. The first thing that we do upon arriving is clean up. I go to the spring, take some water, bring it home and use it for myself, cleaning my face, hair, neck, arms, legs, and feet. I almost have a bath. My grandmother gets angry at me because of water, but not in a bad way, in a humorous way. In summer if it doesn't rain for a long time, a shortage of water occurs, water hardly comes to the springs. You have to use it carefully. Although I try to use it carefully I use lots of water. More than anyone else. I love it when I feel water dripping from my face and my neck, clean and fresh. I always clean myself in front of the house in a cemented area. Then I sit on the sofa under the big mulberry tree, lie there and watch the blue-white sky. The great mulberry tree, its leaves move as if they were dancing in the air with the wind which comes from the Black Sea. The wind doesn't smell of iodine, I wonder why? While I am lying there my grandfather came home from town. His arms are full of packages. I run and take some of them, when I meet him. I carry them and talk as we walk home. I feel great, powerful and important. As we enter the house he changes his clothes. Then he comes and sits on the sofa. With my cousins we rush to sit on his knees.

At the same time my grandmother prepares the feed for the cows which is composed of damaged vegatables from the garden, water, salt, and various things. She feeds them very well. She loves them but when they do something wrong she becomes angry and may hurt them which makes me sick. During the feeding I see my moether milking the cows, talking to them. They listen as if they understand, smell the air with their feed-filled noses and go on eating. I love to watch my mother milking the cows. I sit near my mother and watch and then I try. It feels strange when I touch it. But I can do it.

1-365

After this I go home with my mother and pour it in a big bucket. Tomorrow we'll make butter and ayran out of it. Then with my mother, I go to the sofa under the mullberry tree where my grandfater has already been sitting. Later on everybody comes and sits. We talk about the day, what we did, how the garden is doing. Then my grandmother asks my grandfather what happened in town, whom he met and who was there? As it starts to become darker and the sun goes behind the hills and the sea, spreading its seven colors in all directions, reddening the sky, my grandfather talks about his childhood and the old days. At this time I look out at the sea, see it gently reaching the brown sand with the last light of the sun and curling as if the top of the waves wanted to get higher and higher. I hear the sound of it, in harmony. Then the sea becomes darker, now you can only hear the noise of the white frothy waves. My grandfather continues talking, about the independence war, how Russians came to the river of Harsit, how Turks fought and what Turks did. All of us but especially me, my sister, and my cousins listen to him with attention in astonishment. We love to hear about the old days. We listen as if they were stories and compare our lives with them.

As it gets darker we hear the water a few feet from us and the noises of night creature in the bushes. They talk and sing songs in their own language, but we can uderstand it, songs from nature which nature wrote and composed. Meanwhile neighbors come from town back to their houses. My grandfather lights a fire. As they pass, they stop, sit around the fire, and chat for a few minutes about the prices, what they bought, what was happening in the market, who was at the bazaar. Between the fire, and the mild night wind you try not to feel cold. But sooner or later you do and gradually come closer to the fire. All the neighbors come, stop for some time and go. But they never go without stopping and talking. All of them love and respect my grandfather. Then at last the widow of my grandfather's cousin comes. She has been working for the hazelnut factory may be for fifteen years, and working harder since her husband died, leaving home early and coming home late. She is a real hard worker and a strong woman. She has been looking after seven children, successfully. A woman whom we all respect and some what feel bad for. She sits, talks for a long time. We tell her to stay for dinner but she says the children will wonder where she is so she leaves. We sit for half an hour more and then go back home.

I sit in front of the big sooty fireplace with my grandfather, so do some of my folks. Looking into the fire, my grandfather puts some wood into the fire in order to make it go on. Silence fills the room for a moment, only the noise of wood burning, and our breathing can be heard. Without looking back his eyes pointed to the fire, my grandfather talks to my grandmother, my mother, my aunts, while they sit with him or prepare the meal. Then he goes outside, takes some more wood to burn. As the time goes he moves closer and closer to the fire, loosening and relaxing. I lie on the floor. I am also half asleep with the comfort of the fire. A sweet sleep embraces me. I try to be awake and listen to the talk of my family. My mother and aunts talking to their father. I see the door wide open, light and dark mixes somewhere near the door. Now when I think of these times I can smell the meal. Our cats and dog come. We play with them. We trick them by throwing something into the darkness as if we were giving them meat. They run after it, can find nothing and come back. Their eyes pointed to the pan full of our meal. The cats meowing, the dog moving his tail from left to right, up and down. After a short play we give them their meal, close the door and go back.

We help to set the table, the meal is ready. The table is prepared and we all sit. In joy we eat our meal. You can't find the mood, the condensed feelings anywhere in the world. We are close to each other, we talk and laugh. There is corn bread which is our favorite, meat with onions, and butter, homemade pickles, soup, beans and yogurt which comes to every meal as a tradition. Then sweets. Supper takes a long time. For me it is the best time of the day when everybody comes together, talks in harmony, laughs, understand their love, realize how much they love each other. Later on we clear away the table. But not my grandfather. Then, again we sit in front of the fireplace. The gasoline lamps are lit. My grandmother washes the dishes in the sink. I lie on the carpet and begin to play by myself. From the door which has a basin and a hole for cold water comes. I can hear the whistle of the wind, and the trees whispering. And wonder how they do it. I go and look out of the window. I see the trees in the woods in front of the house bending to each side, dark green, half shadowed, half lighted. Then I see the village on the other hill, lights shining from scattered houses. The noises of night creatures, singing, crying talking comes to my ear. Far away a frog sings for his lover and a jackal howls strongly. As the cows hear it, they become frightened. Then I feel cold, and lonely, as if I am outside alone, and shiver, suddenly.

Then I go back, sit in front of the fire on the wooden floor. The whole family is now sitting there including my aunt and her husband. The thing that I don't like is that, my father is not here. We're all here but he is not. He is working. I wish he were here like my aunt's husband and we would all sit together, chat and have fun. But he is not. He is working.

After a couple of hours the tiring day show its effect. I get tired and go to bed. Light is coming through the window. As I enter the bed I feel this lovely old covering my body. It feels really good. The bed becomes warm. In bed I think about everything. About the sea, river, forest, house, town, the path which leades to town, the main road, the people whom I know and love, the village, my whole life. Then I sleep. I can't think anymore.

Before Cumhur is finished, the 10-minute bell rings. Students all around us take verb test, but most of our group, joined by Audre, continue to listen as Cumhur reads on in the silence.

1st writings, cont'd:

Sue W. heistates before reading her piece. She says it is "private":

> There is no time in my place, no season. It is not touched by age. It is a world in itself. Beyond the pit, and the starry sky of lights, lie the seats, covered with a coarse cloth, labeled with numbers. The red, slanting carpet, leading into the bowels of the (my) place.
>
> A gentle push of air rushes by my face. Its warm grasping touch caresses me. The dark stairwells that lurk beyond miniature (shrunken) doors lead upward, further into the murky night. Night, it is always night in my place. Dark, deep, comforting, silent, my place. The small shriveled door that leads to the sun is bolted, almost as if it forbids us to escape. We unbolt the door sometimes, cracking the door, the light blinds us momentarily. Stumbling, we emerge, not far from the opening--just far enough to feel the first few dregs of air enter our lungs, almost stifling us. Then we return. We always return to the cold cinder block walls, the black musty curtains, the splintered wood floors, and the catwalk railings, which span my place. Our place. I see them all, snuggled together on the red couch, sleeping, drowsy. They lift their heads as I approach, making room for my body to merge into one with theirs. This is our place--no one knows it like we know it. The fistful of keys is our passage; the place belongs to the demons-of-the-red-throne.

After her reading, silence. Finally Cumhur: "It really hits you." Dave: "What went through your mind when Ms.

Allison asked the questions?" Sue: "I stopped listening after the first two sentences. I thought about being in the light booth, and about being backstage ..." Group members seem at a loss for words. Sue: "I know it's very personal; I mainly wanted to know if there's anything in here you can understand." I say backstage is evidently a world within a world, one that outsiders never see. Sue: You can't see it; only those who live it can."

John Y. doesn't want to read. When group urges him to, he says, "Promise you won't laugh." Reads short piece about a track meet. Sandra: "Was that the big meet in New York?" John: "Yeah." Dave: "Did you run in it?" John: "Yeah." Dave: "You should-- No, I can't tell you what you should do, but maybe you might write about what it felt like to run--where it hurt--how you felt; charged up?" John: "Scared." Dave: "Get the feelings out there on the paper."

[More 1st group meetings. Julliet, ~~Kyle~~ Kym, George, Tina, Tim, p. 112; Walter, Dawn, Eve, ~~Ben~~ Bern, p. 117. Eve writes "beach" piece~~s~~, traces over the letters of each word with pen. Dawn makes "joke," writes "stupid," "boring," "put me to sleep," etc. on Eve's piece (p. 122). Audre and I flip. Eve says she thinks Dawn's "joke" is funny (p. 124).]

These first group meetings take two class periods, during which students work on pieces in different stages of revision. Some meet twice with their groups; others spend some time working on their own. Audre asks everyone to read James Agee's "Knoxville: Summer 1915" and Alfred Kazin's "Brownsville" (place pieces by published writers) and takes one class period to discuss these pieces and respond to them in writing. Then we break for Thanksgiving.

After the break, students continue to revise. Some move on to editing completed pieces. As many students approach the final stages of revision, Audre sends them back to groups with guide questions: "What impresses you about the piece? What do you especially like? What is the significance of it? What would be good title?" Group members write their responses to these questions for each piece; then share and discuss them.

Todd and Suzanne disagree about Kristen's piece. Kristen reports:

> In my group today we spent the entire period on my paper. Todd really ripped it apart. For every comment he made, Suzanne would counter-comment ~~that~~ it. At the time he made all these comments ~~so antagonistically~~ I didn't agree at all. When I got home to re-write this, I revised as I went along. I must have kept his comments in mind, because I found myself changing it in the way the comments suggested, and I liked the way it sounded. Each copy I would change another sentence or paragraph. It took me 4 copies of revisions to get what I considered a decent story. I then read it to Dad, who made some comments. The one he felt strongest about was one of Todd's comments that I'd chosen to ignore. Of course, once Dad suggested it I decided I really ought to change it. (Funny who you listen to!) I made revisions and another draft of the story. I then read

> that to my dad, who told me it still didn't sound right. Finally, by my 6th copy I am kind of happy with it. Since it is now 1:15 A.M., whether I'm happy or not doesn't matter a heck of a whole lot because I'm going to bed now anyways.

Suzanne comments:

> I especially liked the tone of Kristen's short descriptive sentences mixing with an occasional long description. I liked it better before she changed it, though. (No offense.) Actually, the tone was effective, but I liked the 1st phase's tone better, but since she changed it I guess it sounds good the way it is.

Audre writes in her journal:

> Many seem genuinely pleased with what they've written. When Todd vehemently insisted Kristen get rid of her short monotonous sentences, she answered that she liked the sound, simple and lulling, and had done it purposefully. Suzanne agreed with Kristen. But, today she's come in with changes. She's combined sentences and has decided that Todd was right or at least intimidating. Suzanne is sorry to see it changed.

[Audre takes charge in third period group; directs George to revise. As he talks, she says, "Write 'neighbor's-dog-hiding-behind-tree'" (p. 126).]

As groups meet for final editing and proofreading, Audre asks them to transfer final, edited pieces to ditto masters. Each group will publish its pieces in a group booklet. Students design cover for these booklets, and transfer these also onto ditto masters.

Emil delays reading his revised piece to his group. He says, as he had said before, that he "hates" writing--"but I did kinda like writing this piece. I even revised it. I cut out a lot of stuff. You'd have to be there to understand."

> ### BECOMING ONE
>
> I am sitting in the corner of a dark and gloomy corridor. I can see good old Mike typing at his desk through the gleaming plate glass windows which have athletic posters attached. It is middle spring at about 2:45 p.m., and I am going through my pregame ritual. There is a poem in my hand, which reads:
>
> WHEN YOU GET WHAT YOU WANT IN
> YOUR STRUGGLE FOR SELF AND THE
> WORLD MAKES YOU KIND FOR A DAY
> JUST GO TO THE MIRROR AND LOOK AT
> YOUR SELF AND SEE WHAT THAT MAN
> HAS TO SAY.
> FOR IT ISN'T YOUR FATHER, MOTHER
> OR WIFE UPON WHOSE JUDGEMENT YOU
> MUST PASS THE ONE WHOSE VERDICT
> COUNTS MOST IN YOUR LIFE IS THE
> ONE STARING BACK FROM THE GLASS.
>
> I can feel my thoughts flowing toward my concentration, and the task at hand. The gray dismal smelly room which acts as my preparation place is letting my thoughts wander and I feel like I am almost ready to go wild. My blue and gold uniform perfectly pressed lays next to my newly sharpened razor's edge cleats that seem to help create the mood I'm working so hard to achieve. My mind and body are approaching unity. Suddenly I spring to my feet and face the freshly painted lockers which will be my final conquest, my entire self becomes one and I proceed to bang my head with all the brute force I can muster against the sturdy steel lockers, after the tenth crash against the locker I am totally psyched; and am both physically and mentally prepared to endure whatever it takes to WIN!!

Emil's piece reminds Dave H. and Tom D. about getting charged up for soccer, discus throwing, and other sports. Then about playing by the rules versus playing to win. Discussion expands to include questions about sports and life, but not about writing.

Walter, who has just rejoined the group, has a revised piece, but no one is listening; the others are copying drafts. Audre stops by to ~~them~~ tell them, "Stop being selfish. Give Walter some help." She stays with the group, insisting on "~~p~~say back," until the students take charge. Walter reads:

> It is the fall. That clean crisp feeling that comes with it in the air is ever present. The ground outside is covered with yellow, red, and brown leaves, that have made their fall from trees. Birds and squirrels dash about nervously, come waiting for their   to take them South, others to find enough food to hold them over for the winter. There is peace in the air.
>
> 8:38 a.m. I wake up. The sun is up now, and I break out of the world of sleep. I begin to notice things in this room that I had not even seen the night before. Through the window I can see birds flying by.
>
> From my bed I can see the many things that make up a typical college room. The refrigerator that can have almost anything in it, from beer to the last night's dinner. A stereo in the corner that didn't have a speck of dust on it. A desk that resembled a junkpile of papers, books, pencils and old coffee cups, that probably had been there for days, and a small desk lamp.
>
> ~~On~~ On the pink wall opposite me was a miscellaneous array of important papers, letters and a few postcards, all stacked up on a very large bulletin board and on just beside it a few rock posters.
>
> To my left a closet. In it

Emil: "Instead of 'beer' and 'old food' in the icebox, what about 'a sixpack of Lowenbrau and a slice of old steak?'"

Tom: "What kind of music might be playing on the radio?"

Dave: "Sounds as if you're attracted to the "free spirit of college life." Walter says that's so.

Sandra has brought what she calls "a different piece entirely" to her group. She has put aside her "ice hockey" piece, which everyone agreed was finished, and returned to and revised an earlier one, written during the "memory" unit, about the "magic" and "mystery" of the Canadian woods as she saw them as a child. Dave E.: "It almost sounds sad ... that you lost--didn't appreciate those things after a while." Cumhur says he can't comment on Sandra's piece because "it remembered me of something .... I flew away." Sue asks Sandra why she chose to return to this piece. Sandra: "It meant something to me." She talks a while about what it meant, and Dave summarizes again: "You mean the simple things didn't--uh--please you? I guess that's not the right word to use. You didn't appreciate the simple things after a while ... " Sandra asks which piece, this or the "ice hockey" one, she should edit and copy over for the group booklet. Dave: "This one. It's more personal." Sue: "I see the real Sandra Kroeger in there."

George says he hasn't added yesterday's material to his piece. "If I'd revised, I'd have to read it, and that's embarrassing." I ask why; after all, other group members have read. George: "Yeah, but nobody's is as stupid as mine." He won't budge, even when Audre comes over to insist the group get to work. The other members of his group won't either; they say they are "not in the mood."

Dave H., Emil, and Tom are copying finished pieces onto ditto masters. Dave mutters, "I hate this piece. I'm sick of it." Emil: "It's boring to have to write the same piece over and over again. I kinda enjoyed this one the first few times, but by the fifth or sixth it got boring; I practically have it memorized ... It got better every time, but it was still boring to do it." Tom: "I usually stop revising after about three drafts; otherwise, I might lost sight of what I wanted to say in the first place--spoil it by adding or changing it too much. I felt that happening with the piece I just finished, but I stopped in time. Now I like it." Emil: "We've worked on this for such a long time--and no one's gonna read it." Tom: "Having other people read it isn't the point. Basically, I write for myself." We question Emil: doesn't the group count as audience? Emil: "No." The class? "No."* Who would count? Emil: "*The New York Times*."

Groups go on revising and editing. Kris has revised 7 times; reports that she is satisfied now.

Kim D. writes:

> When I re-wrote this, there really wasn't much change because I liked it so much the first time. I did change some words around and even added words that I thought would make it sound better. I wanted it to sound kind of poetic in a way.
>
> But I am very very satisified with the way it turned out. * *

James has found a focus for his piece about his father's still-unbuilt-upon land in East Hampton. From

* [illegible] p. 13, for [illegible]

** Note, 1/83 Kim gave this piece to her parents as a Gift — for Christmas [illegible] —

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an early draft, in which he drifted from one thought to another, he has pulled out the line, "This land is like the heart in my body, because it is the heart of the Wilderness." He has made this line his conclusion, and the piece itself a meditation on change and the encroachment of civilization on the wild. [James's draft good example of finding focus. Use somewhere else?]

Kristen, collecting her 28 pages of drafts and revisions, adds a final note on her process:

> When we went to Maine for Thanksgiving vacation I read my piece to my grandmother, Mimi. She gave me some hints about changes I needed and also some suggestions to add. I took some of those and I didn't take some. That's how I got my final revision.

Audre, in her journal, comments on the extra time students have spent on this piece:

> Everything is working in period 3 today. I wonder why? Is it because I've slowed down so that they'll be sharing finished drafts when the "Lehman Deans" are visiting. The thought of speeding up in order to begin a new assignment made me feel ill, and so although this seems a long time spent on 1 composition, it may be worth it. Some kids just don't seem to crank up easily and then (perhaps) I get nervous about their inactivity and press them with "Well, a final's due tomorrow." Do I do this? Perhaps in more ways than I know. Perhaps not. Nevertheless, if everyone ends up with a piece they like--and own --I'll feel wonderful.

On December 3, nearly three weeks after the start of this sequence, Audre gathers the whole class around an open square of tables for what she calls "a thanksgiving."

"We're going to appreciate the hard work you put in ... the help you got from your group ... " She calls on students, one by one, to read their finished pieces to the whole class.

The listeners are attentive, responsive. They laugh at James' refusal to give directions to a city type who wants to pave the wilderness, ooh and ah at Lynne's story of the cruel babysitter ("Did that really happen?"), applaud Tim's piece about the city, with its "smell of hot pretzels, pot, and pollution." Audre encourages responses: "Do you want to tell him/her what you liked about it?" Eve puts off reading until the last possible moment. When she finally does read, half hidden behind her long hair, Audre thanks her for doing it, "When I know it's hard for you."

From Audre's journal:

> Everyone shares piece with whole class. They listen appreciatively and it is wonderful. Even Doug, Steve, and John read. I love today! I feel it has been worth the time. If some have taken advantage of the freedom in order to goof off--others have taken the advantage-opportunity to work and re-work their writing into something they like.

The sequence ends with publication of the group booklet.

RESPONSE TO LITERATURE: A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE

Having built their own fictions, the "sagas," Audre's students turn once again to the creation of a published writer: in the middle of March they begin Tennessee Williams's A Streetcar Named Desire. They will read the play in class; write responses to it, scene by scene, at home; and end the sequence by seeing the filmed version.

Building on the daily response journal writing she asked for while students were viewing The Scarlet Letter and the focused free writing questions she developed for the last cycle of novel readings, Audre passes out a new set of instructions and questions to start students writing about the play. Once again, she leaves options open: "You may wish to do the following ... unless you're inspired to write by some thought that occurs to you as we are reading." (See Insert A.)

In class, she explains what she is looking for: not plot summaries, but "your thoughts, your reactions ... an honest voice."

> Show me that you're going to know this play ... that you're going to make it yours.... Do something with it.... Run it through your brain.... Ask yourself questions about it, and answer them.... What's the point? Keep writing down reactions to what you read and hear. When you look back over your notes, you may find you have a thesis--that's how people write critical reviews.... Get busy ... so that you really have something from the play—not just a vague, fuzzy memory.... Do some heavy thinking about the play ... and writing.

At the beginning of each class, she asks a few students to read what they have written about the scenes read the day before. During class, she punctuates the reading with questions students might ask themselves: "What's going to happen next?... Predict.... Guess.... Do

Named Desire 3/15 Ques Act V and at end of play. (A) 300

In order to stimulate your thinking about the play, please write daily on whatever parts of the play we have completed reading in class. You may wish to do the following ...unless you're inspired to write by some thought that occurs to you as we are reading.

1. Summarize if you must, but only for a bit.
2. What questions occur to you as we read the play? Can you answer them?
3. How does Williams reveal his characters to us? What lines are very telling? What do these lines tell you about the characters? About Blanche? About Stanley? About Stella?
4. As you reflect on the action of the play so far, what connections do you make? To your own experience? to your other reading? to other people you have known? to movies you've seen? etc.etc.
5. What conflicts do you seeedeveloping? How are these conflicts presented? How does Williams suggest these to us? Is there foreboding? What makes you see it coming?
6. What can you predict will happen? How do you see the plot developing? What are the complications?
7. Let your writing go wherever your ruminations take you.

Please put a proper heading on each night's writing. Be sure it is dated, and be sure to list the Acts and scenes that are covered in your writing. You will be expected to write a log entry for each day's reading covered. This will be graded instead of an exam or an essay on the play.

you think Blanche's presence is going to change the relationship between Stanley and Stella? Do some ruminating about that scene.... What do you think of Blanche singing 'Paper Moon' through the last scene? What do you make of her wanting to take all those baths?"

Students, for the most part, read scenes out loud with enthusiasm, getting into the parts. Audre encourages shy readers. Eve won't read, but Sue eventually does. Sandra, who has been reading ahead at home, reads so fast that she changes words as she goes along; the meaning, however, remains intact. [3/9] Kristen, too, reads for sense rather than accuracy. Tim makes Stanley come alive. [Check with Audre.] Audre compliments the class as a whole: "I wish I had a tape, to record this and compare it with the film version." At one point she does tape a scene, and plays it back in class.

At one point, Audre asks everyone to write brief descriptions of the main characters. The next day's class begins with a discussion of Blanche who, Kathy D. says, is like Tiffany in "General Hospital." Audre asks how, and encourages viewers of "General Hospital" to explain the connection. Kym: "Tiffany--she acts as if she thinks she's so great, but really she's afraid of being hurt; that's like Blanche." Kathy: "Blanche can only go with strangers--people she's never going to see again." Tim: "She's the original fantasy queen--singing 'Paper Moon' in the shower, having sex with the paper boy." A chorus of protest: "C'mon. She didn't exactly---" A number of students who don't usually talk in class get into the argument.

As the play nears an end, Audre suggests questions that will encourage students to look more deeply into it. She asks them, for instance, to compare the Kowalskis' world to the Dubois'. Which is superior? Why? How might a reader justify feeling sympathy for Blanche, despite her past life, her deceitfulness, her ~~criticality~~ artificiality? Would a marriage between Mitch and Blanche have been the perfect match if Stanley hadn't interfered?

In considering these questions, she asks them to "review your reading process and try to find some incident in your experience that has influenced you to feel the way you do about the play. Try to find out why you interpreted the play the way you did." She encourages them to "concentrate your energies on seeing what an author says.... The more you look the more you will see.... Trust yourself.... You may see something the most sophisticated critic has missed.... That's where pleasure really comes in reading: from your own individual response, from seeing connections that have meaning for you. Reading is very subejctive--like writing--that's how it is--how it ought to be.... Don't try too hard to figure out the author's meaning. Just trust your instincts and let yourself respond to the work."

And they do:

> [John S.]
>
> Scene VI. So. Will you look at this Blanche Dubois person? I don't know where to begin. I guess by talking about Blanche's light fetish. She seems to prefer, first of all, to carry on all her carrying on with Mitch in the dark. She also mentions the "searchlight" of her life being shut off when her husband killed himself. She seems to think of light as a source of happiness and youth. We mustn't forget youth. Blanche is scratching and clawing for all the youth she can get. I think her obsession with trying to be young is going to whack her out. I also think that's why she prefers to keep the light off--to hide her age from Mitch.
>
> Scene VII. Uh-oh! Stanley's got the poop on Blanche, and the shit's going to hit the fan! At least that's what

I think. Now Blanche is going to be forced to accept some kind of reality. I guess singing "Paper Moon" in the bathtub while Stanely was rattling off all those things about her was supposed to be symbolic.

Scene X. Now I'm really confused. Why, after treating Blanche like dirt, would Stanley want to go to bed with her? And why on the night his baby is going to be born? I know he's a bit dumb, but still, how could he?

Scene XI. Well, well. Blanche is off to Pilgrim State. They'll probably wrap her up somewhere on the fifth floor, locked away in some tiny room. Well, it's all for the good anyway. But what of Brando? Apocalypse Now! I wouldn't be surprised.

[Steve G.]

~~I~~. Blanche and Stanley don't look like they are going to get along very well. Blanche is hiding the fact that she drinks. Stella doesn't seem to be happy with her marriage.

~~II~~. Blanche's drinking will come out in the open. I think Stanely wants Belle Reve or the money from it. Stanley and Stella's marriage will probably be ended in the story.

VI~~I~~. All the characters seem to be looking for a way out. Maybe a way out of themselves. They "all" seem to have something, or somethings to hide....

~~III~~, Blanche says to Mitch, "I'm accustomed to naving no more than one drink. Two is the limit, and three! Tonight, I had three.

This doesn't make sense. From the beginning Blanche has tried to cover up her drinking, but she's not doing a very good job of it....

What will Stanley say or do to Blanche after he hears what she thinks of him? The author doesn't show you, yet, what Stanley will do. Also, why does Blanche flirt and kiss the young man from the newspaper? Why does she flirt with most of the men she comes in contact with? The author doesn't tell as yet....

Blanche will lose Mitch. Stanley will kick Blanche out, and I don't know which way Stella will go. She will either leave with Blanche when Stanley kicks her out, or she will stay with Stanley and try to express how sorry she is about the whole mess to Blanche.

I think Blanche is looking for a way out of what she is and was (the author hasn't told us what that is yet). But, she will probably be turned down by everyone: Stanley, Stella, and Mitch, and then she will move on to somewhere else.

Why does Blanche keep lying? Myabe she doesn't want to blow her "last" chance at a decent life. Will Blanche leave with Mitch and marry him. This was not answered yet.

Blanche is a liar. But she seems to want Mitch a lot. Mitch is strong and masculine, but in a soft and loving way to Blanche.

There is going to be a surprise ending to the story, but the reader (me) is blind at this moment.

Mitch is going to find everything about Blanche sooner or later, and when he finds out about her lies, he's going to be mad. One secret is that she drinks too much....

Mitch is the exact opposite of Stanley. Stanley is "harsh" in a way, while Mitch is soft and gentle. Blanche is like a judge of both of them. Every time Blanche is around those two, it seems to bring out the true nature of them, "harsh" and "gentle"....

Stella is like a person in between a fight. She is friends with both fighters, so she doesn't want either one of them to get hurt. But this is not possible. One of the fighters must lose and one must win. Stella will have to decide the winner by staying with that fighter and letting the other one go.

Stanley and Blanche are the "fighters." Stella is the "referee"....

The author reveals Stanley as cruel and unfeeling for Blanche. Blanche is in a pathetic state. Stella feels sorry for Blanche, but I don't think there is much she can do.

Blanche's life seems to have been shattered by Stanley.

What will Blanche do to Stanley? Does she have any power over him? This was unanswered....

No one can ever trust Blanche, again. Because she lied to everybody. To Mitch, Stella, and Stanley.

What else will Mitch do to Blanche? Wil Mitch be cruel to her?

Blanche will leave. She's still going along with her own lies. She thinks they're all against her. Maybe they are.

Blanche is starting to believe her own lies. She's actually lying to herself. I think her one major problem is drinking. Through personal experience, I know that people who have drinking problems do things that make other people think they should be locked up. And even though they do sick things, they don't realize what they are doing to themselves and other people. They believe their own lies, just like Blanche....

Summarize: Stanley comes home drunk after he takes Stella to the hospital. Blanche is alone with him. She tells another lie to him, but he realizes it this time. Stanley rapes Blanche.

Why didn't Blanche leave when Stanely gave her a chance to? Not answered. Why does Stanley rape her?

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Not answered. Maybe that was his way of showing his anger to her.

Blanche is in bad shape. She doesn't talk sense anymore. She sounds crazy. Stanely seems to want to make friends with Blanche at first, but then she turned away so he started being cruel to her.

Blanche could have been nice to Stanley, but instead she turned away from him.

Blanche lied to Stanley after all the other lies. She didn't have to lie more. Why did she?

Blanche sounds like she's becoming messed up. I can't predict anything yet.

Stanley wasn't going to hurt Blanche until she asked him not to hurt her. She put the idea of raping her into his head.

That was pretty stupid. After this part where Stanley rapes Blanche, she's going to be a madwoman.

Stanley must not be very loving, because while he's raping his wife's sister, his wife's pregnant!...

Summarizing: Blanche tells Stella that Stanley raped her, but no one believes her. Stella is sending her to a mental hospital.

Where will Blanche go? Will they treat her right? Will Stanley, Mitch, or Stella ever visit her? None were answered.

They're all sympathetic to Blanche, but they still think she's crazy.

Mitch really seemed to care for Blanche, and when she turned out to be a phoney, it hurt him a lot.

Stella will probably always wonder if she did the right thing or not. Did she?

Stella will probably never know the truth about Stanley and Blanche.

No one believed what Blanche told them because she had lied so much in the past that they thought it was another lie. (The boy who cried wolf.)

[Kim D.]

In this scene, Blanche does most of the talking and that is trying to get Stella to leave Stanley. Blanche can not believe that Stella could possibly survive under these circumstances. She thinks that Stanley is inhuman (an ape to be exact). She wants Stella to leave somewhere with her. I guess just anywhere away from Stanley.

Personally, I think Blanche is overreacting. She refuses to see that Stella really loves Stanley. Or, maybe she doesn't want to see it. She also can't understand how Stella could possibly be happy living in her 2-room apartment, with wild poker parties, and a husband who is, to Blanche, an animal.

[Joe T.]

Stanley Kowalski is a stubborn, rough type man who would stand up for what he believes in. He's not an instigator, but he has his own set of morals. He enjoys hanging out with the guys, playing poker and drinking beer....

Blanche continues to lie, this time to Mitch about her teacher's salary and her reasons for staying. She's fearful of Stanley, calling him her executioner, which probably means he knows too much about her lies which could destroy her later....

Blanche calls Stanley a commoner, a Polock, which angers Stanley. Blanche continues lying, this time she claims to be 27 years old.

Stanley figured Blanche has been leeching long enough, and buys her bus fare back to Laurel....

Blanche is now totally into space dust. She whips up a beau, Shep Hunteleigh, who will take her away on his yacht. Blanche seems so involved in her stories that I think she believes in them.

Stanley and Blanche finally have their fling that was expected since they met. I'm not sure why he was attracted to her; maybe he wanted her to realize he was special, or maybe he wanted to teach Blance a lesson where nobody would believe what happened. Maybe Stanley wnated to see how he compared or matched up with Blanche's high-class beaus. In any case, if Blanche doesn't change soon, she'll live a lonely life....

I think that Blanche put herself in a position where she thought she was rich, in control and could manipulate things, but then she had much pride to say that dealing with problems the way she had, was wrong. She coudln't take a fall. If she did she'd have to come back two more steps. I hope now she comes to her senses, or else she'll never have any real feelings, just mechanical.

Questions: The reader feels sympathy for Blanche at the end of the story because she's limp and weak and she's being taken away by the doctors in front of everyone, but I personally didn't feel any sympathy. She was a bum. Others had figured her out and told her to face facts. Her world affected others because it involved them. I think she deserves a good kick in the behind.

[Leonard M.]

Blanche arrives to visit her sister Stella. The first person she talks to is Eunice. She can't believe that Stella lives in such a rundown neighborhood. She then goes inside. You can tell that she is nervous and insecure by her actions. One example of this would be when Blanche finds a whiskey bottle and sneaks a drink. One other example of this is when she goes into hysterics when she tells Stella that she lost Belle Reve. When Blanche first meets Stanley she seems very nervous, almost afraid to stand face to face with him. She lies to Stanley when she turns down his offer to have a drink, by saying she rarely touches it. Her need to lie is another sign of her insecurity....

In Scene Three it is poker night, and even more is revealed about Stanley's personality. The characters of Steve, Mitch, and Pablo are introduced. Stanley gets drunk and gets into a fight with Stella, further showing his barbaric tendencies. Blanche shows her dislike of Stanley for abusing Stella, further showing her spoiled upbringing.

[Greg F.]

Stan tells Stella all he found out about Blanche. He also told Mitch. If Blanche found this out, I think she might try to kill herself. Everybody knowing the truth about her. That she was kicked out of a town. Stella is not sure about all of this. She is uncertain. She must be emotionally upset, suddenly finding all this stuff about her sister's past.

[Dave H.]

Blanche reveals to Mitch her romantic past; her first love. She married him and later foundout that he was gay. She embarrassed him in public about it and he killed himself. This reveals some of the cruelty that Blanche was or might still be capable of. She said that there has been no other since him but rumor, via Stanley, says differently.

Blanche is revealed even more as a person living in a make-believe world. She denies her past and lives in the days before her degradation in Laurel.

[Lauren]

Stella: She is very content where she is. Living in New Orleans is all she wants. She loves Stanley and we can see that she accepts him for what he is. She understands him when he's drunk. She recalls their honeymoon when he broke light bulbs. His being destructive excites Stella.

Blanche has feelings for Mitch. She wants him but doesn't want him to lose respect for her. She's very confused. She can't deal with problems.

Scene Six: Mitch and Blanche had gone to an amusement park. She tried to have a good time, but she didn't. She talks about leaving soon because she's out stayed her welcome. Mitch is doubtful whether or not he should kiss Blanche. He feels that she is rejecting him. She is a very strange woman. She has philosophies about everything in life. She is trying to pretend that she is the innocent type, but then she admits to being a little bad when she was losing Belle Reve, and with Mitch she asks him in for a night cap and wants the lights out. And she seems to enjoy drinking, yet she seems to enjoy drinking, yet she explains that she doesn't do it much. She speaks French to Mitch and once she realizes he doesn't understand she says "Voulez-vous couchez avec moi ce soir?" She is very forward, yet she proclaims she had old-fashioned ideals. In this scene Blanche again shows her concern for people's talk about her. She also becomes edgy about her age and doesn't like to speak of it. She does speak of loneliness and what the death of her young husband was like. She seems confused about life. She really doesn't know what she wants.

[Suzanne]

Stanley seems like this really street smart rough guy who is realistic and a good judge of character. I think he and Blanche are very similar, yet very opposite at times, so there might be a lot of upcoming conflicts, because both are such strong characters....

Stanley's ill manners and crudeness and ~~masochism~~ machoism really come out in this scene. Blanche tries to snow job Stanley about her background and Stanley is no dummy; he can see it. It was kind of careless for Blanche to slip and mention something about her dead husband who was only a boy. I'm dying to know the details of this mysterious boy. Poor Stella, it looks as if she's going to get pushed between these two, bumped back and forth.

At the end I'm certain there is some heavy symbolism when Blanche says the blind are leading the blind and then a tamale vendor yells, "Red-hot!" It sounds like danger to me....

A lot of symbolism pops up with reference to the streetcar named Desire--how Mitch desires Blanche, Stella and Stan desire each other, as Eunice and Steve do. Blanche desires youth and self-respect. Stanley desires Blanche to leave his home....

Stanley's self-centeredness macho clearly comes out as he has no regard to his wife except that they used to have fun before Blanche came here. Also, he doesn't care that it makes his Stella happy when her Blanche is happy. Instead, he's making everyone miserable with his hypertemper.

[Emil [redacted]]

A Streetcar Named Desire enlightened me to the fact that three is a crowd, and that Blanche was a carousing lush who couldn't handle the pressures and responsibilities of adult life and in the end she goes crazy because everyone catches on to the lying ways she uses to become friends with everyone.

[Cumhur [redacted]]

Blanche, a woman who is lost, who is not sure of herself and who rode the streetcar named Desire. She came to the point where she is, on this street car. Loneliness, losing all the time, not knowing what to do, escaping from problems, becoming more lonely, almost having a nervous breakdown.

Stella is riding on the same car, too, but she hasn't lost yet. She sounds innocent; needs somebody to lead her and is not strong enough to cope with the problems that arise, becoming dependent on Stanley. Stella can't decide what to do, and if there's nobody who she can hold onto she becomes a handicapped person, riding the streetcar, down the hill....

The book reminded me something as it described the place where Stella and Stanley live. Something that I can recall. But I don't know where from.... [long description of place]

During the poker party, Tennessee Williams show us characters very well. Blanche acting as if she were innocent, not knowing about the life of the poor sides of the city. Mitch also acts as if he were a pure, trustworthy man; he probably is more understandable of all the men, but if he sees that you are the type, he'll get you.

Stella and Stanley are really tied to each other. They fought. Stanley hit her with his hand. Then Stella left home to stay with Eunice. She cried, said she would never go back, but when Stanley called her, said that he'd not leave the porch until she came, Stella came down and they both went in. They fight, but they love each other and know that they want each other. A kind of a relationship where you can't find in noble families. But theirs is simple. Whatever they do they'll get together again. Maybe it is because they are not rich. They don't have anything but each other. And they don't want to lose what they got.

[Kristen [redacted]]

We are introduced to three main characters. I noticed that Tennessee Williams tends to be very ironic.

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In the beginning, he gives us a description of a poor neighborhood, not a great place, but better than many. He names it Elysian Fields, which means Paradise. Blanche takes a streetcar named Desire, to Cemeteries, to Paradise.

When Stella and Blanche meet, they seem happy to see each other, but there also seems to be some hidden undercurrent to everything they say and do.....

Tennessee Williams was even more subtle in his hints than I picked up in Scene 1. We went over the characters in class, and I was especially surprised by what we came up with for Blanche. Williams describes Blanche as mothlike. He mentions the fact that her beauty can't take the strong light. In the first scene, she tells Stella not to look at her in the light. "I won't be seen in that glare." Moths are attracted to light, but the light kills them....

Throughout the first scene, the reader is introduced to the three major characters. From their dialogue you can determine a great deal about their personality and background. The plot and future course of events has not been revealed, although a few personal habits and incidents seem to be leading to a major theme. Blanche has come from home to visit Stella (her sister) in New Orleans. It appears that she has not come for a friendly visit. There are many things that are bothering Blanche, and her nerves and drinking display this openly....

It seems ironic that the discovery of her age in the full light, and the confession of her past come out together. It's as if Blanche knew all along that once the veil of darkness was lifted, the truth of her being would be revealed just as clearly as the wrinkles of age on her face....

Blanche begins a long lie in how she received a wire from a millionaire friend who invited her on a cruise in the Carribean. The story of course does not fool Stanely in the slightest, but perhaps it is not really Stanley that Blanche wants to fool. She needs more than anything to convince herself that there is a future, and that her life will not be forever filled with disappointments, running, deluding, and hiding....

Stanley became violent and proceeded to get physical with Stella. Blanche was stunned by the brutality which Stanley displayed. She and her sister went up into the next apartment to get away from Stanley for the night, and what amazed Blanche even more was Stella's returning to him in the night. The next morning Stella has completely forgiven Stanley, but Blanche cannot understand it. She tells Stella how they will get away from Stanley. When actually Stella has no desire whatsoever to leave Stanley....

I would strongly predict that some type of relationship will later arise between Blanche and Mitch....

In reading through the same chapters, I found myself much more perceptive. Being familiar with the dialogue and events, I was able to look closer at what was actually taking place in the story....

The day starts out ordinarily in the apartment. Blanche rambles in her common dreams of gentlemen and elegance ... then Stanley. He mentions the name Shaw to Blanche. She tenses and recoils strangely. She has not made the acquaintance of any man, she says, but it is obvious that the   has struck a soft spot. The Hotel   was mentioned, and had the same effect....

This leaves me with a few unanswered questions. First, what is it about "Shaw," "Hotel   ," and "Laurel" that raises Blanche's blood pressure, and what secrets are hidden in such places and people?

[Sandra [redacted]]

The characters Williams depicts are intorduced through their actions and thoughts. The characters are believable and life-like. Stanley seems like someone who loves life. He is ready to jump off the page at any moment. He is happy bowling, playing poker and washing down beer. Stanley doesn't feign intellectualism, rather he is happy with life the way it is. One witnesses this from the very introduction of his character when he throws the meat to his wife.

The story is of course laden with symbolism. The lines and descriptions are fraught with adumbrations. One can see a conflict developing between Blanche and Stanley. Blanche is the last of what seems to have been a dynasty. She is seemingly living with what once had been. Stan in contrast seems to be a man of the moment. He is carefree and will get to it tomorrow....

Blanche doodles upon the past in all her actions. She has love letters from past affairs and fox stolls from past acquaintances. For her things were better in the past. She is a habitual flirt and does not relinquish this attitude with Stanley, despite the fact that he is her sister's husband. She playfully sprays him with the perfume and he smashes it upon the dresser. While Blanche lives for the past, she also condemns all but herself for the loss of Belle Reve. One can, however, infer that this is only a cover to hide her own deep guilt.

Personally, I like Stanley. He is honest and without pretense. He may be gruff or even crude, yet he is a wonderful contrast to Blanche, who embodies many characteristics which I loathe....

At this point in the play many questions still plague me. Does Stanley love Stella? What is the significance of the title? And what is the significance behind the recurrently mentioned piano? At this point I am beginning to surmise that the piano shows that which is constant as it has been mentioned at least once in each scene.

In earlier scenes I felt a preference for the character of Stanley, because he seemed so carefree and without inhibitions. Yet as the play continues to develop I find my sympathies pointing more and more toward Stella. Stanley seems to love her, but he is crude towards her. Blanche is critical of her almost every action, insulting her life, her husband and her surroundings. Stella has boldly ~~badly~~ broken away from the weights Blance still carries with her. She knows things are not wonderful, yet she will do her best. Stella is patient and caring. Admirable characteristics in her circumstances....

Blanche is quick to criticize and assume things. She calls Stanley common and brutal as she bounces around in her gawdy attire making herself judge. Blanche is a character that evokes contempt in me. She is many things I do not like. She is ungenuine, haughty, bombastic and even cruel. Yet later one finds that she is to evoke sympathy. Quite a character, indeed. Blanche thrives on tradition, memory and what might have been, a meager fare to live by. She tries to better herself not by her own blood and sweat but by lowering others in an attempt to raise herself, a tactic not known for its success....

Blanche flirts with a paper boy in this scene. I feel sorry for her. It is almost as if she is trying to catch these people. She wants and needs someone and her way of finding this someone is to be superior to them. She is coquettish and this once again exemplifies her life of pretend.

In this scene I also notice that whenever Stanley enters there are trumpets and drums playing in the background. Perhaps such stern instruments to emphasize his machoism....

Scene Six is the evening which Mitch and Blanche spend together in Stella's apartment. Blanche is her usual self-feigning to be someone she is not, but wishes she was. Early in the scene Blanche speaks French with Mitch, giving herself an air of refinement. To this charade Mitch replies simply, "Naw"....

Immediately, one can see the conflict impending here. Mitch for all his simplicity is honest and forthright. Blanche, on the contrary, is a dreamer, so much so that her life is a dream. She even refuses to face the reality of aging. Blanche and Mitch will never make it. Mitch will demand only honesty of Blanche, and that she simply cannot give. Blanche would demand everything of Mitch and curse his crude simplicity. She would forever tell him she could have married a millionaire. They are two very contrasting characters. Mitch is going to take what he is given and accept the fact that he will not become president. Blanche will forever bleieve that she was destined to "make it"....

Scene Seven may be considered a crucial turning point in the play. Stanley reveals to Stella what he has learned. Through the entire discussion between Stanley and his wife, Blanche can be heard singing ~~times~~ tunes all alluding to fragile hopes and dreams. Almost as if she were unknowingly excusing the things she had done. At first Stella calls this a pack of contemptible lies. Yet she too soon realizes that they are true despite the fact that Blanche is her sister. Stanley has told Mitch what he has learned and one can see that the fragile relationship of Mitch and Blanche will shatter at once....

The collapse of Blanche and Mitch's relationship follows in suit with the themes of the play. It shows that magic is wonderful, but when placed in a cage with reality it will inevitably be conquered....

Scene Eight develops with Blanche realizing that her secret cannot remain forever hidden. She sits with a "tight artificial smile," as everyone is well aware of the vacant seat at the dinner table. Blance tries hopelessly to break the ice by telling a story which amuses no one. The story in itself seems relevant to the play as Blanche tells of a parrot who cussed like a trooper yet would be quiet as a mouse while hidden beneath a covered cage. Yet the parrot could not hide itself for long and soon its true colors began to shine. Blanche and her situation are somewhat analogous. For example, Blanche is truly far from pure. Yet she hides herself in the dark and covers what she can. This guise will however not hold up well as eventually, inevitably her true colors too, will shine.

[Walter [redacted]]

Stella seems very stable to me. It doesn't seem like she is very intelligent, but in fact very wise, woman. She is blind with happiness. It's kind of like she is in her own world. Basically she has her baby to take care of....

There is going to be a point though when they both go at it full force. I can't quite see what is is yet. But I do suppose it will be quite a scene to watch the two go at it.

Stella is really starting to show signs of being torn apart by both of them. Her almost unbreakable calmness is starting to crumble with the time, tortured by the whip of Stanley's remarks and poked with needles emerging from Blanche's tongue; she begins to wither herself into an almost silent figure between the two, only separating them with her shadow.

Being stood up by Mitch was traumatic for Blanche; it was the point at which she really wants to go crazy. She knows that her reality is being broken apart....

Mitch in this scene seems to remind me of Stella. He is very stable and sound-minded with her and, he acts as sort of a mediator between Blanche and Stanley. It's almost as if it didn't matter if Mitch was mean to Blanche, only that there was someone there to take away from her own loneliness as Stella had done before that. ...

Mitch reminds me of Stella so much so that it almost shocks me to think what might happen in the end....

Stella is always the mediator between the cat claws and dog teeth....

Stanley puts the knife in the dead carcas, so to speak, when he gave Blanche the bus ticket. After being stood up by Mitch, Blanche tries again to cover up her feelings by trying to tell a story to pick up the mood a bit. Stanley blows up at the both of them, but not because of his hatred for Blanche, but for his pride of being a man.

Stella has taken a side with Stanley and she turns as cold as ice to Blanche. At the end of the scene Blanche knows that it's finally over for her.

The final conflict between Blanche and Mitch took place in this scene. Mitch finally literally sheds the light on Blanche's life, you might say that he saw her for the first time. The increasing sound of the music tells us that her last hope of love for Mitch was gone. When she knows that he knows, she goes back into her little world of "magic."

Again the music comes from the past, signifying what her past is about. The music increased throughout the scene and came to a climax when Mitch turned the bright light on her.

She leaves the scene with a desperate attempt to make Mitch leave her, by screaming "fire" after having been terrified by the poor Mexican woman selling flowers for the dead. She is terrified because somehow there is a connection between losing Mitch and buying flowers for the dead. The two have in common one thing that is obvious--the end of Mitch and the end of life....

1, Kowalski vs. Dubois: The obviously superior world is the Kowalskis' world. People cannot go on living a world of make-believe and pretend and expect to get along with each other. In the Dubois' world you never knew if what that person was saying to you was true or not. Contrary to that of the Kowalski world nothing is ever real and nothing is ever taken

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> seriously either. Trust is an essential part of the way that people interact with each other, because in order to have any sort of interaction of people you have to have a common base for everything to work from. With the Dubois world there is no base in which to work from.
>
> The Kowalski world is the truthful world. With knowing that whatever someone says will be the truth there is a firm base set between those people who are in it. The Kowalski world had not only this aspect, but it also carried ~~caused~~ the more real world along with it more than the DuBois, because there was no confliction to mix which story was which and which lie was which, the truth is right at the fingertips of everyone who wants it, because there is no confusion of what is the truth.
>
> 2. My reading process was a "catch some at first glance but really understand a second, third and fourth glance." It really took a lot of inspection and linking of phrases and words to understand just a small part of the play. My process formed into one of a hopeful expectation process, hoping for my hypothesis to come true and specifically looking for them also.

See also Lynne (next page)

Audre collects these logs twice, after Act V and at the end of the play. As she reads through them, she makes checks in the margins opposite interesting points, and asks further questions: "What does this all add up to?" "What is evidence for this?" "I know what you mean, but it could be a little clearer here." She underlines what seems to be on target: "Yes!" Next to Todd's

> It seems ironic that the discovery of [Blanche's] age in the full light, and the confession of her past come out together. It's as if Blanche knew all along that once the veil of darkness was lifted, the truth of her being would be revealed just as clearly as the wrinkles of age on her face.

she writes, "Really good point to notice!" and "Great! Another thesis statement." When he writes,

> In reading through the same chapters, I found myself much more perceptive. Being familiar with the dialogues and events, I was able to look closer at what was actually taking place in the story.

she writes,

Lynne Russo

A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE

3/16/82 Scene 1

Is Blanche an aloholic? She seems to have a serious problem. Blanche is ~~wede~~ rude even to her own sister. Why is Blanche shaken up and ~~neivous~~ nervous? What happened? Is she always that way. Blanche constantly ~~critises~~ critizeses Stella "Oh, you've gained weight." I think that's an awful thing to say. Blanche finilly begins to explain. She says that Stella was never there. Blanche had to see the death, Stella didn't. I think that Blanche has hurt feelings towards Stella. I guess because Stella left Belle Reve.

Stella seems polite and quiet, she is ~~Blandres~~ Blanche's opposite. Stella said that Blanche talks so much that she can never get a word in.

I think that Blanche may cause trouble, between Stanley and Stella. I mean she lies (Blanche she said she doesn't drink whe she does. Blanche is annoying, she tries to act sweet when she throws out her rude comments. The thing I don't understand is that Stella doesn't say anything back, she just takes it.

Stanley (Stella's husband) the T shirt type, seems to be a tough guy. I think he's crude and I don't like the way he treats Stella.

In the play Tennessee Williams describes Blanche as moth-like. She's untouchable, she has to stay away from the light. "Her delicate beauty must avoid a strang light."

I wonder what that means. Blanche is critical, she wants sympathy, she's bitter when talking to Stella. She may be an alcholic, she lies, and she's talkative and unstable. By unstable I mean she's nervous and she fluxuates throughout the first scene, changing her mood constantly.

Scene 2 STREET CAR NAMED DESIRE

Stanley can be pictured a little more clearly now. He's uneducated, macho and likes to hang out with the guys.

Blanche flirts with Stanley, I think that she acts like a child. And why did Blanche tell Stella that she was flirting. Stanley is self-centered and only cares about himself. Why doesn't Stella want to tell Balanche about having a baby. I understand why Stanley accused Blanche of selling Belle Rive, she did have nice clothes and jewelry. I think Blanche is turned on by Stanleys tough macho attitude, why else would she flirt I hate the way Blanche tries to fish for compliments from Stanley, she is so nervy. Blanche tells Stanley that he's simple, straight forward and honest, but a little primitive. Stanley doesn't fall for her compliments and I like that. She puts on a big act.

SCENE 3 and 4

All the guys were together on Poker night "they are men at the peak of their physical manhood, as coarse and direct and powerful as the ~~pumary~~ primary colors."

Blanche was so worried about her appearance as usual. Blanche is nervous again. I don't see why she's always so nervous and when she's nervous she takes a bath.

All the men are drinking and arguing about the deal. Blanche flirts with Mitch, one of the guys. You know what really bothered me? She said that she usually only has one drink. Blanche is such a fony. I can't believe that she calls Stella her little sister when Stella is older, Why?

Why did Stanley go into such a rage and throw the radio out the window. Was he jealous of Blanche and Mitch or was he annoyed at Blanche?

Stanley is awful to hit his own wife and Stella just takes it, She doesn't want to leave him. Stella is not unhappy with her relationship with Stanley. She loves Stanley and doesn't want to leave him. Blanche keeps on saying "Your married to a madman." Blanche wants Stella to leave him and also Blanche seems to be attracted to Stanley. Stanley and Blanche have moved away, there not close, they are totally opposite. Stanley overhears Blanche talking against him, but he doesn't say anything. He makes believe he didn't hear. What is Stanley going to do? I thought in the beginning that Stanley and Blanche would get together but now I'm sure there not.

Scene six

She thinks that Stanley hates her. She asks Mitch if he knows anything.

"He was going to be my executioner. That man will destroy ~~all~~ me."

Her husband killed himself because he was a homosexual.

"You disgust me." reference to light.

How does this make the character Blanche?

Why did she lie?

Blanche writes a letter to a man named Skip. She wanted her and Stella to live and Blanche figured that it was her way out.

Blanche says that she's not going to stay around until Stanley throws her out. I think she's just making exuses. She's not planning on leaving.

Blanche is going to go out with Mitch. Mitch is a sweet and shy gentleman. He is also very sensitive and he seems to like Blanche. Why does Blanche lie to him? (Stanley)

Why did Blanche kiss that young boy? Why did she act so childish. What meaning did that kiss have? What is Blanche up to.

Lynne Russo

Scene 6

Mitch seems to really like Blanche. I think it's funny how she bosses him around to find her door - key and open the door while she looks at the sky. Blanche acts so shy and innocent. Lying again Blanche tells Mitch that she has old-fashion ideals.

Blanche tells Mitch how she lost a loved one it was her husband "There was something different about the boy, a nervousness, asoftness and tenderness which wasn't like a man's although he wasn't the least bit effermenate looking-still-that thing was there." Then she found out that he was a homosexual. Her husband shot himself and Blanche feels guilty because she said just before his suicide "You disgust me" Instead of offering her help. Blanche did the opposite.

In the beginning of the play Tennessee Williams described Blanche as Moth-like delicate, sensitive and untouchable. Moths are sensitive to strong light. When the headlight of the locomotive glares into the room Blanche is sensitive, delicate and pure not like usual. She is different when under the light she is honest and true.

Blanche said - "I saw! I know! You disg~~e~~ust me..." And then the searchlight which had been turned on the world was turned off again and never for one moment since has there been any light that's stronger than this kitchen candle.

Under the light she is a sensitive and truthful person and the search light had been turned off when she showed no feelings and said 'You disgust me...'

"It was like you suddenly turned a blinding light on something that had always been ~~hard~~ half in shadow, that's how it struck the world for me"

The blinding light may represent love and when she mentions the"kitchen candle" maybe she's found love again.

Scene 7

Blanche's Birthday

"Blanche was regarded as not just different but downright loco-nuts."

Blanche in her world and Stanley in his.

"They kicked her out of that high school before the spring term ended and I hate to tell you the reason that step was taken! A seventeen year old boy - she'~~s~~d gotten mixed up with!"

Maybe that is why in one of the last scenes, the one with the young man that Blanche kisses, Blanche said that she must stay away from children. She thinks back to her husband.

Stanley told Mitch, and now Mitch doesn't want to see her any longer.

Stella is trying to make exuses for Blanche.

Blanche is in a panic because she expects something is going on. She knows that Stanley and Stella were talking about her.

Stanley gets jealous when Stella gives Blanche more attention.

Blanche is going to have to face reality.

There is a big connection hetween the paper boy and the 17 year old did in the high school. She looks at them the way she looked at her young husband.

SCENE 8

Blanche has been stood up. She asks Stanley to tell a story.

Why does Stanley get so angry?

"Don't ever talk to me that way.

"Pig - Polack - disgusting - v~~o~~ulgar - greasy!"

These kind of words have been on your tongue and your sister's too much around here!

1-400

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"Every Man is a King!"

Stanley doesn't like to be put down and I feel that he blames it on Blanche. What I mean is that I don't think Stella said anything like that until Blanche arrived.

SCENE 9

She told the truth. (BLANCHE)

Everytime the light is shone on her, she tells the truth.

It bothers me when Blanche greets Mitch as though nothing happened. But I do feel sorry for her. I think she may really have feelings for him.

When Mitch tore the paper lantern off the light bulb at first I didn't understand. But now I do. He said that "So I can take a look at you good and plain."

Blanche doesn't like harsh reality and.

She tells him that she Stan says what ought be true.

She tells the truth.

She confesses to what she is all about (Blanche.)

SCENE 10 and 11

I really feel that Stanley raped Blanche. I have such pity for her now. I feel so sorry for her I can really understand her how all that flirting was just an act, deep down inside she was hurting and she knew that she was living in an imaginary world. I really was suprised when she was afraid and tried to move away from Stanley, I don't think the play ever really showed her like that. Before I would have thought that she would jump right into Stanleys arms, but she did the opposite. And I know that there wasn't any feeling between Stanley and Blanche. Stanley liked to show power and I think he was trying to prove something.

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SCENE 11

The first thing 9 that came to mind was, "does Stella know?" Why didn't Blanche tell everybody and make a big thing of it? Did Blanche tell Stella and Stella didn't believe her? What happened to that trip with Skip? Was that a lie too. I never thought of Blanche to be totally crazy I just thought she had a few problems. How could Stella have her sister put in an institution? Is that right? Was Blanche brought to some kind of mental institution? that's what I thought happened. How could they do that? I feel so sorry for Blanche ~~kney~~ now. Why did Blanche go with the doctor?

Oh I forgot, the incident with Stanley just totally broke her down. After that she was ruined ______. I liked Stanley in the beginning and now I hate him. It is all his fault. I blame him for Blanche's ~~breathdown~~ breakdown it wouldn't never gotten that serious. And I don't like Stella either, I think she's dumb and naive ________, I think she ~~shouldn't~~ should've listened to Blanche. Boy did that ending bother me. It made me hate everyone but Blanche.

1-402

QUESTIONS:

Do you agree or disagree: A Mitch - Blanche marriage could have been a perfect marriage if Stanley had not interfered? Show how you arrive at your assumption.

I totally disagree, a Mitch - Blanche marriage could never have been a perfect marriage even if Stanley had not interfered. Just think if Blanche married Mitch, She would have kept so many lies locked up inside her that he would've found out sooner or later. If Stanley found out Mitch could certainly find out. Imagine if Mitch found out that Blanche wasn't as pure and clean as she said she was when he married her, that would be a quick divorce.

I also think that she wouldn't keep on lying and the marriage would never work based on a bunch of lies. Also sooner or later Mitch would have to see her in the light if he was going to marry her. There would be no way that a Mitch - Blanche marriage could've worked.

"I noticed the same thing. This always happens--and that is why it is sometimes more fun the second time."

Next to Suzanne's comment on the blue piano ("It suggests depression and wrongness"), she writes, "You're in touch with what it says to you." When Suzanne speculates, early in the play, about the tamale vendor ("It smells like danger to me"), Audre writes, "Sherlock Holmes here? You may be onto something."

When Sandra muses about Blanche's story of the parrot, and its connection to Blanche's life, Audre writes, "Good exploration--risk-taking--reaching."

Final entries in the logs are made after the class has seen the filmed version of the play. The final scene plays during an April blizzard. Audre: "When you read something, you bring something of yourself to it.... Your reading starts somewhere, with your own reaction, but it may change, too, as you read, or talk, or hear other people's ideas. Did your reactions to Streetcar change as you watched the film? Did the way the actors played their parts change how you saw the characters?"

Audre's comments to ~~Walter and~~ Sandra:

> It is such delight to follow the process of your reading, your , your reaching, your connecting with what you know. Your synthesis to make this play your own. I think you trust yourself. You ought to.

To Walter;

> And that does make for pleasure, doesn't it Walter? Real (?) working with the play--real listening to the author!

LAST DAYS

In High School the school year does not so much end as disintegrate. It's hard to find a time, or a place, to say goodbye. Some students take final exams during the last week of classes, then leave; others come back the following week for Regents. Various "ending" events--proms, class parties, softball games, graduation--are strung out over a period of weeks.

Audre and I yearn for an end with roundness to it. We want to end the year, as we began it, with writing.

On the last day of classes Audre brings in grapes and cookies; I add ~~a~~ baskets of strawberries from the farm down the road. Everyone is excited; it's the last day, the last issue of the school newspaper has just arrived, Suzanne has made All-County in yesterday's softball game. News and high voices gather momentum. When Audre askes everyone to settle down and get ready to write, there is a moment of shocked surprise. "I'm not writing!", says Doug. "I thought we were just gonna hang out!"

Audre tries to look stern, and hushes the tumult. "This is the most important writing you've done this year. It will count for half your grade!" The corners of her mouth twitch. Kids giggle. A grape flies across the room.

She passes out a "case study" sheet, and asks everyone to take a few minutes to write "The case study that never got written."

> Assume that you are another person writing about yourself. Let's say you are the sensitive, supportive, observant writing partner who has been working very closely with you, watching you, interviewing you, listening to you, and recording (in the CASE STUDY section of a notebook) your development as a writer this year.....(as planned at the beginning of the year.) What would she/he have observed? What would she/he have learned about you as a writer? Write, here, the CASE STUDY REPORT that never got written!

The noise never really dies down. Audre and I, predictably, complain that we can't write without some degree of quiet. Our complaints are drowned out by talk and laughter and the blaring soundtrack of a cartoon being shown next door. After five minutes, we give up; only three or four students are still writing. We start to read.

Audre goes first: "I wrote almost nothing, but..."

> This has been a wonderful year for me--crazy--but filled with surprizes and delights (and an occasional disappointment.)
>
> Suzanne is effervescent this morning and Dave is ecstatic- I think the strawberries and grapes were fermented--Next year I'll bring a heavier dose--and a five-piece band--I'm always trying to get it right--never quite make it. The last day is wonderful--we've all accomplished so much--and learned so much.

I read from my notes from the beginning of the year. Cunnur starts to read his "case study" but before he can finish a fire alarm goes off--one of the many false alarms to be set off this day--and we all pour out into the parking lot, where we stand around for the rest of the period while, as a student tells us, "they check the lockers" for smoke bombs and the raw eggs someone has been ~~smashing~~ breaking on the stairwells.

Audre has had the presence of mind to scoop up the stack of "case studies" and bring them outside; she and I pass them back and forth, reading out loud to each other, delighted that, even in a few ~~rushes~~ rushed minutes, some students have captured themselves on paper. A few have misunderstood the assignment, and written about others; some have ignored it and gone off on their own. A handful have surprised and touched ~~my~~ me by including me, as a matter of course, in their appreciation of Audre. Most, even the unenthusiastic ones, strike us as honest.

John Y.

From the beginning of the year John has improved a lot. At the beginning, he would write a paper and it would be short and dull. Then he got into a good writing group and started to improve. He must really like track because that is what he mostly writes about.

His last paper was not short and boring. It was rather interesting. He has accomplished a great deal.

Kim D.

I feel that my writing has improved a lot this year. I've learned to use a bigger vocabulary and organize my paragraphs better. The things I write about, I explain in more detail, and I've learned to "show" instead of "tell".

Through my writing this year, I've learned to enjoy it and really appreciate what I have written. Sometimes when I'm alone and have nothing to do, I'll start writing, which I've really never done before.

Todd

Sept '85 Todd's writing is "good" (oops). What I mean to say is, his piece is well constructed, clear, and verbally efficient. But there is something missing. It has the sounds of an assembly line. Each sentence has been refined and then placed among sentences formed in the same manner. There is a mechanical flow suited more for a thesis paper, and the writer's tone is often felt as an external, analytical force.

June '86 Ah, what a joy it is to read Todd's work now. His style is personalized and his feelings are very evident in his work. The story flows freely and it conveys the feeling that the writing came easily. He is a much better writer.

Sandra

Dear Ms. Allison,

It's been a long year in many respects. One that was valuable in many more respects. As I said so often and as I am sure you know by now I came in with an attitude that was less than positive. "Writing groups? Process? What kind of junk is this," I thought. Well, by the end of the 1st quarter you had won me over. Now I see the strengths of the models we have used all year, and more importantly it is something fundamental, that I will continue to practice throughout my life as a writer. Perhaps we can start a revolution, and soon there will be a writing group in every college dorm, latter in the executive offices of IBM and soon every family will have its own writing group during prime time.

Getting back to the subject at hand, this year has definitely been one in which I have become aware of many new things. Although a lot of me is having a hard time breaking out of the old mold I feel confident that time is my only barrier. For many reasons I have woken up to many things I had taken for granted. Perhaps this is due in part to my serious dissapointment in the sciences, only forcing me to search for more.

One example of this is my reaction towards the novel Babbit by Sinclair Lewis. At the beginning of the year even though I respected the writing I wondered how could anyone write anything so patently unpatriotic. What a closed mind I had. Now I really appreciate the novel for the social critism it provides. What this country needs is more people as patriotic as Sinclair Lewis. Am I getting "stupid?" My only excuse is the fact that this is a fire drill, one of many to come.

Well, Ms. Allison, thank you for a wonderful year and for being patient with me (lack of parallel structures, sorry.) I hope that this will be the beginning of friendship. (Humphrey Bogart said it better but I mean it more.)

Love,
Alexandria

Dave H.

Dave's writing has improved this year. He has learned a more careful approach to his papers and they don't go off on tengents anymore. His writing is more focused.

He re-reads his writing more carefully and is less reluctant to revise, (though not more than twice!)

Suzanne

The observer would have seen that I'm a terribly messy writer and my first drafts are incredibly illegible. I scratch wrods out three and four times before I get it right.

If I spend a lot of time re-reading an incomplete piece I tend to unconsciously leave out parts that the reader doesn't know about and it becomes confusing and I can't realize it because I know what I'm writing about.

But anyway this year I've improved as a responsive "groupie" and this helps my own writing.

Cumhur

The year started with a piece of writing which the teacher said, "Very good." It was a simple, effective essay. Writing was simple at first, just plain. There was no understanding of it, nor the struggles, nor the pain which satisfies at the end. Writing was partly censored, I was only able to write about certain things, and there were things which nobody should learn.

Throughout the year I succeeded in getting over this feeling. I wrote about everything without any exception. I shared them with others, with my teacher. It was learning myself through my writing, experiencing different situations. As I got into writing more I understood it more. The process, the importance of self-evaluation. It was not simple anymore. Writing now was a complicated process which needed not only feelings, but also intellegence and experience. This year was a growing together, learning together and developing our writing and thinking skills. I'd like to say that I'm a good writer now but I can't. I might write better than I used to, I understand better than I used to but there is so much more to learn.

Sue

Dear Ms. Allison,

I want to thank you for a year of trial and tribulation. There have been many times when I needed some acceptance, and you provided some of this. Of course, I still remember the time you dragged me into a crossfire between the Board of Education and Bay Areites (something in the line of duty?) This year has been fast and slow at once--and it was hard sometimes.

As for English--English, well, you've seen me and heard me in action many times before. I feel I am more confident as a writer than when we began in September. As an observer of myself--I can hardly be objective. There is nothing relevant I can write this day.

By the way, my case study is being written.

Debbie

Dear Ms. Allison,

I thought that this year was a very good one. I learned alot, especially how to write good compositions. My writing improved a lot this year compared to other years, and I learned how to write compositions using correct grammar, usage, and correct sentences and punctuation and made my compositions have meaning. I like writing compositions and this class has helped me to like writing them even more. By doing compositions over and over again the way we did this year, and writing processes for the compositions, and writing about three drafts of the composition helped me very much becuase by doing it over and over again I changed what I didn't like and wrote better. I'd look at my 9th and 10th grade compositions and they are not that good, this year I have really improved greatly in my writing and hope that next year I'll do even better. I'm sure I will because now I know how to write them correctly, and like writing them.

Walter

As a writer Walter has improved greatly this year. He has learned to analyze and specificly check all points of his work. He has learned to use process as a major step in all his pieces, and to understand that not everything that he writes about is a good piece.

Ms. Allison, although sometimes unclearly, helped him to learn to check his work and to never be satisfied. I'm sure if he were here right now he would thank her for all the help she gave him.

Ms. Wilson also helped him alot. She always had something positive to say about his writing and she always pushed him to explore himself for the answers that he needed.

Shawn

Shawn's writing is the best I have ever read. I can't understand why his work hasn't made the best seller list yet. I can feel from the continual uprise in Shawn's ability to express words on paper that he will eventually win all the best literary awards available. Shawn's ability to write drama, comedy, poetry, plays, short stories, in fact any type of writing you can think of will be part of Shawn's continual success in life.

Have a fantastically wonderful summer.

Steve M.

The person I am writing about knows only a little about reading and writing. But if he wants to he can write up a good piece. If you can be serious he will be able to handle it and do a good job about it. Sometimes he is never paying attention. But when you learn you do get better and become a stronger and smarter writer.

You observe many different things like how to make a boring story and revise and turn it into something excellent. This year I've become an improved writer in many ways. Thanks to the teacher.

Dave L.

During the last year Dave's writing has improved greatly and in this objective observer's opinion, Dave should give a great big thank you (!) to Mrs. Allison and Mrs. Wilson and all the helpful writing group members who provided the liberal environment necessary for relaxed writing. I think that this class I have experienced the most productive writing atmosphere ever.

It is possible to get students to write more quantity ~~qualitatively.~~ if you crack a whip. But the quality will undoubtedly suffer. I think that you have attained a perfect blend of discipline and freedom. I know for a fact that I have done my best writing ever this year.

THANK YOU!

James

Case Study on Myself

Being completely observant on my partners notebook (myself), I noticed that he has developed a certain technique in writing. He first starts writing on a topic, just starts writing, whatever comes into his head. Sometimes it's stupid and makes no sense, but sometimes with revision, it becomes a masterpiece.

Starting out in the beginning, writing beginning, middle, conclusion, later to be writing totally open with his thoughts.

Kym: "Case Study Reports"

Kym has grown in her writing and has learned what it takes to hand in a self-satisfying story or poem. She didn't revise too much when she started in September, but then realized it takes more than once to eventually come out with a decent story.

I remember when she was rebellious to all that Ms. Allison tried to teach. Now, she listens to other's points of view (especially Ms. Allison) because she respects her opinions.

Her grades have increased from a C+ in the first quarter to an A- in the third. She doesn't always apply herself, she can be very lazy at certain times, but all in all has been a pretty consistent worker.

Her writing usually consists of love and heartbreaks which shows that she is very sensitive in that area. She writes her feelings not just words on paper. I believe that she has matured in her writing.

Kris: "Case Study Reports"

Kris has improved a great deal this year. She has learned about her writing in a way she has never learned before. She wrote about how she wrote stories. This she called her process. In each one she explained why she came up with what she had. She learned how to be creative with her writing. As the year progressed she became less up tight when she first started.

She learned about techniques other people used to get started and she learned the value of drafts. Kris writes poetry on her own but she learned how to improve on her poetry during the unit she did in class.

Kris feels good about the way she writes and is going to do some over the summer. Now more than ever she writes to get out feelings that perhaps would never show through! This class has helped Kris very much and she really enjoys writing. Thank you!!

Karen: "Case Study Reports"

I feel the person whose come a long way is Lynne. Her style of writing has grown so much. At first she was too structured, she would only say so much and then stop. Well, as the year has come to an end I love her writing. She has her own style and its very interesting. Even her vocabulary has grown. She has opened up so much. I know she has even begun to write a novel with Dr. Dorfman. She's so interested in writing. I feel this is one reason why she's become a great writer. I hope she continues on because I think she's talented. She writes of her own personal experience in an odd way, I'll never know who the main character is and it's always her at the end. To me her writing is pretty! Also: Karen to Andre: "This year you let us write the way we wanted to — so we let it out —"

Lynne: "Case Study Reports"

Lynne has grown tremendously as a writer. She has developed into a careful and concerned writer. She takes her writing very seriously and has been able to open up to share the pieces that she writes. That is something she almost never could do. It used to take alot of courage for her to read her writing but now it is as if it comes naturally. Now, it is enjoyable for her and she has found writing to be a wonderful experience.

Lynn has learned to listen, to respond to others' writing besides her own. She found the group experiences helped her in developing into the type of writer she seeks to be.

Edais: "Case Study Report"

Edais is a sort of sensitive writer. She likes to write about war since it is something that she feels has a lot of feeling toward. Her favorite author is Ernest Hemingway. She likes him because of his form and descriptive writing, also because most of his novel are of war and that's what she likes, as I wrote before.

I obeserved her form of writing and things in which she liked to write about. I have learned that Edais likes to write, but she has to be in the mood to write. She likes her work, not all of it, but her poems and reading logs she liked, also she liked doing them. Then again, figure all writers are like that!

Have a great summer Ms. Allison. You're the best teacher!

Steve: "Case Study Report"

I think Steve has done wonderful in the past 7 months. He came here in October when he was very mixed up with personal problems. But he pulled himself out of the gutter and started from scratch. His writing has always been about himself. And he uses his experiences to make good writing. He hasn't gotten the marks he could get, like straigh A's, because sometimes he just doesn't try hard enough, but he has really progressed. I think Steve will do good in life. He'll help anyone that needs help.

Eve: "Case Study Report"

In this case study report, I am doing on Eve Olsen, is true to life facts on her progress in English 11. I feel that she is sometimes disruptive and troublesome, but in all improved tremendously. She has learned the basics in English 11, and I feel possibly even a little more. I feel that a decent grade for the quarter, and a farily good grade for the year

> will be sufficient. Please take all into consideration at grade time.
>
> Lauren: "Case Study Reports"
> Lauren is not the most organized writer that I ever met. She does however manage to come up with a piece of writing when necessary. She tries to write about her feelings, at times this causes problems for her because she has no feelings and will probably become a part time Hot Dog vendor. She does however write mostly from personal experiences or thoughts. When she has trouble beginning a piece, she sits down and just daydreams. We all know her whole life has been a daydream but we pity her, and pass her for the year because god knows we don't want her in our class next year.
>
> Tom: "Case Study Reports"
> He's the best writer I ever heard! Seriously though, Tom has developed his writing style, and abilities since the beginning of this year. He has opened his thoughts to others more than ever before. That was a big accomplishment, because I know that's a very hard thing for him to do. He enjoyed this year very much, although it may not have seemed like it at times. This English class has allowed him to see more clearly exactly what writing and expression is about. He has opened the door, and now it is time for him to walk through.

All day students pop in and out, asking Audre and me to sign yearbooks and wishing us a good summer. "Is this your last day to take notes?" Tom asks me; and I realize, with a pang, that it is. Audre and I hug and kiss students and, through all the disruptions, smile at each other. We are glad to share the joys and sorrows of this last day.

POSTCRIPT: AFTER SCHOOL

In the weeks after classes are over, we tie up loose ends. We compare notes, ta to a few students who drift in; gather papers, and end the year writing together at the back table in Audre's now-empty room: companionably, in harmony.

Audre reflects on the year, and writes in her journal, This year has been important. I've looked very closely--I've discovered what is most important to me--in teaching writing with emphasis on process. True, the product is better--but that is not what is important. The importance lies in what happens to the students--how they grow--in confidence-in self--in coming to see writing as useful, as a means of pleasure even. At least I believe they all saw it as less painful and were able to write more easily. So it is not what they produce, but what they go away with--that feeling that writing is what you do for yourself and the knowledge that if you do it for yourself--you'll get pleasure--if it is done in your own voice there is always the possibility that it will give pleasure--that it is all together different from writing to please the teacher--writing to try to be "right"--when the "right" is not from your own gut (heart-brain). To be pleased with yourself is pleasurable of course--and we all need confidence in our own ability to generate our own pleasure. How strong and courageous it makes one feel. Where does the pleasure come from? Probably from self-discovery--exploration and discovery of self--this is not mysterious--yet it has a grand metaphysical quality to it--or magic. Kids know this--Sue said it early in the year. Well, there is no better pursuit than discovery of self--self realization and so up the scale we go as we grow (unless thwarted). So it is not the development or mastery of discrete and measurable skills that makes writing valuable (even though emphasis is put upon that--because that is observable in a good writer) it is the development of the whole person--which under normal (big load, much work) teaching circumstances can barely be discerned.

So one asks--what are the ingredients? What makes emphasis on process so richly rewarding? It makes the writer look within--pull back--rid oneself of distraction--look and see--discover "I am"--or some of it. It's the beginning of an essential life process.

Of course this process approach improves the classroom. Kids are making connections with one another. Discovering how they are a like in an honest way--discovering how they differ and trying to understand why. Discovering that there is satisfaction in resisting "peer pressure" (in a small way) by talking out your differences and in that way, better understanding your own position. Since consensus is not the goal in a writing group and the real task is that the writer clarifies (attempts to articulate, encourage self-reflection) and makes his/her own decisions about writing that he/she owns. Idiosyncrasies are cherished--differences expected and enjoyed.

The benefits are enormous--kids can feel themselves grow--some of them even understand how--that through the group--writing process approach they reach farther--connect more--trust enough to stand alone.

END!

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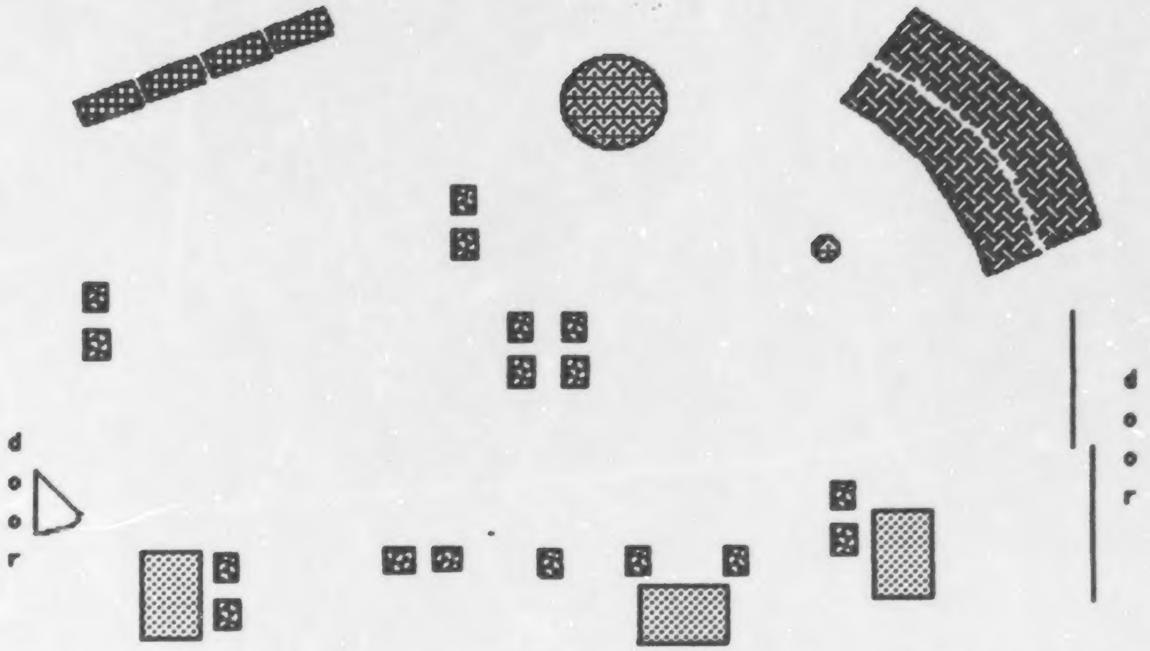
"Wanna read my story?!"

This is the story of a class of fourth grade writers. During the year these seventeen children gathered after lunch and recess to write and share their writing for an hour or so three afternoons a week from September through June. Streaming in from the playground for paper cups of water and their writing books, these students carried their playful enthusiasm into a collaborative, writing workshop scene. Here is what the classroom looks like:

(See graphic of Anita Graves' 4th Grade Classroom -on separate page.)

The kids enter from the classroom door, from the sliding glass door which leads out to the playing fields. Each heads for his or her desk and reaches for the "8x10" writing book and a pen or a pencil amid the chatter and clatter of making the transition from the playground to the class writing activity . Eyes dart to the upper right corner of the board where Mrs. Graves will have listed the afternoon's tasks and note the time allotted for writing and for sharing. A typical schedule would read:

12:45-1:00-Journals
1:00-1:30-Writing Time
1:30-1:45-Sharing Time



Anita Graves' 4th grade classroom

LEGEND:

Individual student desks ▨

Conference table, stool ▨

Teacher's desk, large work areas ▨

Sharing steps ▨

Carrels ▨

The First Writing Assignment

Anita started writing on the first day by handing out yellow composition paper and having her students list ten items about themselves and in doing so to keep their identities secret. This assignment, called "Who am I?", helped break the ice and start the year in a fun, nonthreatening manner. After collecting and shuffling the papers, she read them to the gathered students and let them guess who each author was. Thus there was no pressure to read what one had written nor to make the writing perfect. In getting to know one another through their writing these students were beginning to explore interests of their own and from one another's lives. Speaking in a calm clear voice, Anita began:

"We're doing a kind of secret writing today... Tell people something about you that other people might not know. You might write down your favorite dessert or pet, or that you have a purple rug or a dachsund, or that you were born in Brooklyn. Try to think of ten different things about you. Then I'll collect them and we'll try to guess who you are. Here's some yellow paper so no one will know--don't put your names on these."

As kids get up from the steps, collect a sheet and head toward their seats, one boy asks, "Do you have to write in script?"

"I'd like you to, Michael, but if it's very difficult you can print."

"Do you have to draw a picture?"

"No, Amy, but you can if you finish early."

By now the class has dispersed to their seats throughout the room and Anita moves from desk to desk. Cindy is stuck. Her teacher suggests, "Maybe... maybe some new clothes or somewhere you have been this summer- maybe a visit to your cousin's or your sister's? Cindy nods.

How do you spell airplane? Sharon calls out.

Anita looks up and says, "Don't worry about spelling --it's not going to count today--sound it out as best as you can." Anita sees Maureen's hand go up and heads toward her. Jeff turns as she passes and asks, "Are you supposed to write what it is on the paper?" She stops, checks his paper (to keep it a secret), and advises, "How about where they used to live? How about your grandparents?"

Maureen looks up quizzically and asks when Anita arrives, "Maybe there are some things you want to keep secret?"

"Well, if it's real private you may not want to share it but just keep it to yourself." Maureen offers Anita a peek at her paper. After reading it Anita acknowledges the problem for Maureen: "It's really hard when your best friend is in the class.. Tell you what --we'll say that Janine can't guess in class. " Aloud to the rest of the class Anita instructs, "If you recognize right away it's your best friend, don't give it away--keep it a mystery."

Turning back to Maureen, Anita commiserates , "It's really hard when you have a best friend in the classroom."

Introduction of Journals

In these ways Anita placates individual fears and concerns such as neatness and privacy and sets a tone for a low-key safe place to work on writing. The next day she introduces journal writing by again gathering the students together on the sharing steps and saying:

"Today you are going to get a special book. You can write anything you want in it." She holds up one 8x10 booklet. "These are yours. You can design the covers... We will write in them for ten minutes almost every day. They belong to you. You can share them or you don't have to share what you write in your journal."

Cindy: "Can you use it like a school diary?"

AG: "Uh, huh."

John: "Can you write in it if you have any free time during the day?"

AG: "Yes."

Jeff: "What if you can't think of anything to write?"

AG: "You can doodle and you never have to show it to anyone."

Michael: "Can we have extra time?"

AG' "If you like--just ask."

As she hands out the books, she continues, "Here you are. Put your names somewhere on the outside of your book. You can decide on your covers and then write. There are some magic markers in my desk drawer." The kids rush to their desks , selecting various colors along the way to decorate their covers.

"I'm making it slanty and curvy!" says Cindy as she writes **CINDY'S DAIRY** in flowery script. (actual spelling)

Anita and a nearby student share a laugh as they both at the same time write their names on the outside of their books and open them to discover that they had each written "upside down". "I did the same thing, Michael!" She explains quietly to another student who has looked up at her rewriting her name on her booklet: "I get one because I'm going to write in the journal too." She begins her first entry:

September 14, Now that I have my oldest son married off this weekend, I will be able to concentrate more on journal writing and school things. It is 12:55 and we are all writing in our journals..."

Soon the ten minutes set aside for journal writing elapse and Anita, without rising from her seat at the round table, mildly instructs, "Finish up the sentence that you're working on and come on over to the stairs. If you have something to share bring it over with you."

"Look how much I wrote so far!" exclaims Kevin, holding up his book with his first page about filled. She smiles and continues, "Okay, as soon as you're ready, come on over and bring your journals with you. Some of you may want to share and some of you may want to show your covers." All assemble on the steps with Anita before them on the stool.

"I just want to find out if there is anything you did you want to share. Perhaps an idea you got while you were writing? Perhaps a story that you've written? What did you find yourself writing about? Anybody want to share their covers?"

"Here's mine." says Jeff from his seat, showing his cover with blue stars and a gold sun in a purple, black and green border.

"Thanks, Jeff."

"This is my design." says Michael shyly.

"Okay...AmyBeth?"

She comes up before the class and points to her cover and pronounces,"It says 'Private. Keep out. Don't dare look!"

"Alright , I guess we know how she feels about that!" comments Anita as AmyBeth returns to her seat.

"Does anybody have something they want to share? Tom?"

Tom: "It's not finished yet."

AG: "Do you want to read it?" Affirmative nod.

AG: "Okay, class, we have something here by Tom that he wants to share with you." He reads his Star Wars piece to the class:

THE REBELS ON HOTH

'DID YOU RECHARGE THE LAZER TANKS?" ASKED LUKE SKYWALKER AS HE CLOSED THE COCKPIT TO HIS SNOWSPEEDER. 'THE TANKS ARE RECHARGED. YOU MAY TAKE OFF.' SAID COMMANDER ZACK . LUKE RACED OUT OF THE DOCKING BAY TO FIGHT THE SNOWWALKERS. LUKE FLEW UNDER A WALKER AND FIRED HIS HARPOON. THE HARPOON HOOKED ONTO THE LEG. LUKE WEAVED IN AND OUT OF THE WALKER'S LEGS. THE WALKER STUMBLED AND FELL. WEDGE, LUKE'S FRIEND HIT THE GENARATOR, AND THE WALKER EXPLODED IN A BALL OF FLAMES. A WALKER WAS CLOSE TO THE REBEL BASE SO LUKE AND...

Tom stops and looks up to show that that is how much he has written so far. Anita picks up on that and adds, "And it ends there and it leaves me wondering what happens next..and only Tom can tell us." She turns from addressing the class to smile at him. He beams.

"Kevin?" He has been raising his hand to share.

"I got somethin'" and he reads :

KEVIN AND THE EXTERMINATOR

WHILE I WAS WALKING IN BROOKLYN I FOUND A BURNT BODY. THEN ONTHER AND ONTHER AND ONTHER. SO I WENT HOME, FLIKED ON THE TV AND THE NEWS CAME ON. HE SAID THAT 4 BODIES WERE KILLED BY FIRE. SO I HAD TO INVESTIGATE. I GOT MY GUN FROM THE CLOSET AND I WENT OUT ON THE STREET. A CAR ALMOST HIT ME , SO I BLOW IT UP. I SAW THE KILLER SO I CHUKED MY KNIFE AT HIM AND KILLED HIM.

THE END

Boys' laughs punctuate his tough-guy reading --especially when he mentions "4 bodies killed by fire" and the part about the car blowing up. As Kevin finished, Jeff comments, "" Excellent!" The violent actions of the characters clearly engage their attention. The girls appear interested but none respond verbally.

Writing Process Principles

These early signals that Anita sends out are critical ones for establishing a writing process workshop environment for her students. She lets them know that they will be able to write frequently in school (and at home if they wish) on topics of their own choosing. She lets them know that they are the ones to decide whether to continue on the same topic or drop it for something else. Such decisions of ownership over their writing are theirs to make as are any decisions to share work with classmates or the teacher. As we progress through the rest of the school year's writing activities and events, let's watch the ways in which Anita continues to fashion the development of writing and sharing time around the needs of her students.

Introduction of Room Maps (Day 4)

After breaking the ice with the Who am I? assignment and introducing journals Anita launches into her room mapping assignment. This had worked well the previous year to engage students in writing on something that they know about and that utilized drawing as an aid to writing. What the students are to do is map their room , to take "a tour of your room " in drawing first and then in writing. So large white paper is distributed and the class sketched the shape and contents of their rooms . After a couple of work sessions on these the class was ready for the idea of conferencing with a partner on their room maps. Anita begins with these overall instructions:

"First we'll write in our journals for 10 minutes, maybe a little longer. Then we'll share. Then we'll read a few more of the"Who am I?" sheets. And then you can have some more time on your maps. When you finish you can start to find a friend who is finished and share your room idea." She hands out their maps and continues. "Take these back and work on them now. When you finish find a partner to conduct a tour of your room with...The person you are conducting is going to ask some questions--be ready on that. Sometimes when you tell someone something you remember things you forgot."

Kevin is ready to partner and Anita volunteers. She takes his map of the room and asks him to ,"Close your eyes and just pretend you are describing your room, Kevin." He composes aloud and ticks off the various items in his room. When he opens his eyes she comments, "You

see, I'm finding out a lot about you by going through this room with you." He realizes when he looks at his map that he has mentioned three things he had not included. "And the more details you add the more it will be interesting to your partner." She then moves around to others who appear stuck. "Just rehearse in your mind what you're going to say to your partner. Go all the way around the room--like a person conducting a tour in a museum." To another, "Pretend that I've just come to your house. You say to yourself what you're saying to me."
A couple of writing days later the schedule on the board reads:

12:50-1:00--Journals
1:00-1:30--Write first draft of "My Room"
1:45-2:35--Art

After the journal writing session, Anita hands out the room maps to owners, commenting,"Today we're going to try something different. Today we are going to talk about conferences and about first drafts. First drafts-- do you know what that means?"

"First drafts means going to the Army!" grins Kevin.

"To do it a first time and to do it again" volunteers Rich.

Anita explains: "You know we've all been working on maps of our rooms. And then we just spent time explaining it to a partner and conducting a tour around the room. Well, a first draft is when you write just as if you were describing it to a partner. Some people call it a "sloppy copy". It's easy enough for you or another to read--it's not perfect though. If you're stuck (with your room map) what do you do?" Several hands go up.

"Christine?"

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"You look at your room--you ask your partner."

"Sharon?"

"You share your map."

Nodding yes, Anita points to two areas of the classroom where she has placed new signs reading **Conference Spots-Five Minutes** and says,"Those are conference areas. You can come and ask me permission if you want to have a conference for five minutes. When your five minutes are up, you can go back and write some more."

"My problem is I was sharing with a thing," said John.

"Who or what do you mean?"asks an amused Anita.

John points to Richard and says, "All he said was 'Yep' or 'Nope'".

Anita turns this into a teaching opportunity. "Uh huh. What are some of the things you could have done which would be helpful? Cindy?"

"To be a good listener."

Anita, "Yes. To help another person by being a good listener. What else? Richie?"

"By asking questions or saying things like, 'Tell me more about your fish tank'".

"Okay. Now here's what you can do for choices. You can look and sit and think. You can rehearse in your mind. Or you can conference. Will you quietly go back and work on your maps at your desks?"

Kids excitedly negotiate whom to have conferences with and some start to pair up . After two five minute conference periods have elapsed, Anita asks:

"Janine, you just had a conference. What did you do?"

"Shared. We read it over to see what we could add." She returns to writing on her draft.

Kenny laughs, "He forgot to put sticks of dynamite in his room, but it wasn't really in his room."

"I forgot to put in my globe." says Amy softly.

"That's the kind of detail to add. You're lucky to have a globe." comments Anita.

"So do I!" pipes up Michael as he realizes that he forgot to put in his globe.

Writing time is about up according to the schedule , yet two boys rush over with a request for a conference. Anita decides, "Okay, I think we'll have time for a three minute conference."

"Oh, excellent!!" shouts Matt as he and Jeff speed off to the steps area.

After a couple more days most of the class is on its second draft or conferencing and the schedule reflects the workshop feel:

12:45-1:45--Writing Journals, My room, and Sharing

After the writing and sharing time is used up Anita takes the opportunity to clarify some confusion about conferences that she has noticed. "Some of you are a little confused about what a conference is--what do you think it is? Cindy?"

"A conference is a place where you are getting new ideas from someone else."

"Uh huh. Why are we having a conference, John?"

" Because we want to see if we left anything out."

"Good reason. " (She smiles over to me.)

Now Eric and I will model a conference. I will be the listener and he will be the teller. Okay, Eric." He reads:

MY ROOM

WHEN YOU COME IN YOU WILL SEE OUT MY WINDOWS AND SEE MY BED. NOW YOU MOVE A LITTLE TO YOUR LEFT AND KEEP LOOKING STRAIGHT AND YOU WILL SEE MY SHELF AND ALL OF MY BLACKBOARD. NOW TURN AROUND AND YOU WILL BE SMACKED RIGHT IN THE FACE WITH THE DOOR KNOB OF MY CLOSET. SIT ON MY BED AND LOOK STRAIGHT AND YOU WILL SEE MY BOOK SHELF AND RECORD PLAYER. ON THE TOP LEFT THERE ARE RECORDS IN THE MIDDLE BOOKS AND ON THE BOTTOM MORE BOOKS IN THE MIDDLE ON THE TOP ARE TIME MAGAZINES. IN THE MIDDLE ARE MORE BOOKS AND ON THE BOTTOM ARE PUZZLES. ON THE RIGHT TOP ARE LIBRARY BOOKS AND IN THE MIDDLE ARE MORE BOOKS AND ON THE BOTTOM IS A TRAIN MADE OF WOOD. NOW LOOK DIAGONALLY AND YOU WILL SEE MY DESK AND TOY SHELF ON THE TOP . I PUT A LOT OF JUNK ON THE LEFT MIDDLE IS LEGE AND ON THE BOTTOM ARE MATCH BOX ON THE RIGHT TOP IS PLAYMOBILE AND ON THE BOTTOM ARE TAPE CASSETS AND WHEN YOU GO OUT AGAIN YOU WILL SEE THE CLOSET.

Anita begins the conference, "What kinds of books are there?"

"Let me see. There's German books, there's Hans Christian Anderson, there's Aesop's Fables, and Jungle stories. I got English books like Treasure Island and ...

"He's German, you know" contributes Richie informatively to his teacher.

"Well, when you want to add stuff, like the book titles, put an arrow in to show where it goes." She demonstrates with his paper. "You don't have to recopy it all to insert something. Write the stuff you have forgotten. Your eye won't miss it."

Several days later and a couple of more drafts along the way Anita herself decides to participate in sharing time. She initiates it by announcing:

"I want to share. I've done a terrific thing." She beams at them as she proudly displays her composition on a large sheet on an easel before them at the sharing area. "Im going to listen and see if you have any suggestions." She reads her room tour full of sentences scattered about making reference to her yellow wastebasket. She finishes and asks, "Isn't that terrific? Isn't that great?"

The class catches on.

"You keep going back to your wastebasket."

"You are always in the middle."

She asks , "How could I make this better?"

Kevin: "Put all that stuff about the wastebasket together." Several agree that the details are sprinkled about and should be grouped better. So they cut and paste the wastebasket details into shape on the easel.

Anita writes about this activity in her journal: *Once or twice a week, I plan to have a "lesson" before journal writing time--I don't know what they will be but yesterday was a start when we cut the wastebaskets out of my room piece. I put My Room up, written in magic marker for all to see. I had sprinkled sentences about my wastebasket throughout. I read it aloud and it was Kevin who got the point. I was pleased and I had him repeat it. I had pictured taping up the sentences and that would be that. Then when the sentences were read as a paragraph, they decided they really didn't sound as great and could be improved. When they started combining sentences to improve the paragraphs I was elated! I had had children in the fifth grade who couln't understand what this was about when it was presented in a workbook exercise. Learning things in isolation on workbook pages is so meaningless!"*

Anita found this a particularly good writing assignment to use to introduce writing process techniques. Students are doing several drafts, conferencing with partners to see what is needed to improve their writing, sharing their work before the group, and writing on a topic which experience has shown her works well because it is "*"personal and concrete."* The key to the success of the lesson has to include the fact that Anita participates in each aspect of the process of composing for her students. She demonstrates how to conduct a conference,and uses herself as a guinea pig for revision on her own draft (not some workbook exercise). She validates drawing as a means of communication by having her students display both the final drafts as well as the completed maps. And,finally ,as a reactive teacher, she is flexible enough to go with the flow when the students turn her cut-and-paste revision lesson also into a sentence combining exercise. She adheres to the maxim of her namesake Donald Graves' saying ,"The children lead and the teacher follows." As we see she is willing to get out of the way when her students' needs become other than those she thought they were.

We have a sense from the above descriptions of how Anita launched writing process approaches for her fourth graders. Through sharing time particularly these students were able to make their writing their own. By mid-October , Anita writes the following in her journal: *Children seem genuinely carried away with writing during journal time. There seems to be no question as to what to write. The boys are writing about races(cars) and the girls seem caught up on mystery stories."*

It should be pointed out that Anita never collects their journals or reads them without the permission of the writers. She serves as audience or editor at their request and never as topic provider or judge. They can write on whatever they wish in their journals and decide on whether they wish to share or not, as she said at the beginning. As their teacher she is comfortable in not knowing or controlling exactly what is in their journals. Because the writing is theirs, she feels no compunction to know or "own"their writing.

As the classroom ethnographer, I was in a position to learn from my work with the students just what topics they were interested in and have prepared a catalogue of stories to illustrate this. Here is a brief summation of what they were writing about between September through November:

Cindy is writing on an extended Sherlock Holmes piece while Amy K. is doing a Nancy Drew spinoff. Maureen writes about Sherlock Squirrel and rainbows. Eric and Rich draft biographical pieces on Sitting Bull and Red Cloud, respectively, from their Social Studies classwork. Meanwhile, Mike is writing "Smokey and the Bandits" ,as John starts with The Clash of the Titans to be followed with back to back versions of The Shining and Happy Days. Star Wars influences Tom first, and through him, others. He and Kevin attempt adventure and racing stories, notably, "Tom the Racer"and "Truck Driver Kev". Matt fashions a Charlie Brown story with built-in sound effects, while Kenny B. writes about those popular cartoon characters, the Smurfs. Sharon puts Snoopy into a Halloween story while AmyBeth, with a similar setting, writes a brief mystery called," The Rainy Night". Jeff's first pieces are about "Super Jock" and baseball while Christine's are about her family and playing soccer. Janine writes about friends, flowers , and rabbits, and Kenny S. does humorous pieces like "How to Cook a Turkey".

The patterns in their story writing tend to fall into three categories at this point of the school year. One group,like Cindy and Rich, represent a literature-based genre of story writing. Their writing reflects the influences of the reading they are doing in school or at home. A second group, with Mike and Sharon as examples, represents the entertainment genre, and shows the influence of the movies and television shows in their lives. A third group of writers, like AmyBeth and KennyS., tend to address real issues. They write about things close to home,their playground activities, familial settings, friends, and the things they know about--a personal kind of writing. A fourth kind of writing, a social-based genre, is also an emerging trend that I would like to develop presently.

The teacher as follower

An essential belief practiced by Anita is to take her cues from her students and not to railroad her expectations through them. Generally she is sensitive to what it is they want to write about and lets them do so. What she does do is make little adjustments and rules to fit the circumstances that arise so that writing and sharing time continue to function for everyone. For example, when Tom wrote the following story in October, it was met with great enthusiasm and his classmates were eager to include each other as characters in their stories-- a pattern that continued hot and heavy throughout the year. Here is Tom's trend-setting story:

4G VS THE TEACHERS

IT IS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE 4G WAR. THE TEACHERS VS 4G. MATT JUST GOT KILLED AND, OOPS! THERE GOES MAUREEN. WE HAVE OUR GUNS READY BUT KEVIN ATE THE BULLETS. MR. JUTTING SHOT AMY KRONIN. I THOUGHT THEY LOVED EACH OTHER. KENNY BETTENHAUSER SHOT MRS. GRAVES. AND MIKE, OOPS, THERE HE GOES. HELP! I HAVE TO GET OUT OF HERE.

SOMEONE BOMBED KEVIN'S HOUSE. THE BUS DRIVER CAME TO MY HOUSE, BUT MY LAWN WAS A MINE FIELD. BOOM! THE BUS DRIVER WAS KILLED. ALL THE TEACHERS DIED AND WE WON! ALL EXCEPT FOR WHO

THREW AN OCTOPUS ON ME OUCH! I KILLED THE OCTOPUS AND JOHN KILLED THE CREATURE. MS. MASS WAS SCREAMING. SHE DIDN'T GET KILLED, BUT KEVIN BURPED AND BLEW MS. MASS INTO ORBIT. ALL RIGHT KEVIN, THE BURP THAT SAVED THE DAY!

THE CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON

Tom's story was read with great relish and received with delight by his classmates and spurred them to start using one another's names in their own stories. Anita notes this phenomenon in her journal , *"The status is to have your name mentioned in a story written by a friend. During journal writing time people go around asking, 'May I put your name in my story?'* When I asked Tom about using classmates' names in the stories he was writing , he explained, "Because I can't think of any good names for just people I dream up." Tom seems quite pragmatic here so I asked him if he ever " matched up personalities of kids to story characters?" "Yeah", he said. "Sometimes I have Kevin in my story. I match him up with Indiana Jones (see his "Raiders of the Lost Arc" piece) and Janine as his girlfriend. And I used Richie for Evil Knievel in one story. I think he is a pretty good kid."

Anita adjusts to this trend with a simple and practical solution: you need to get the person's permission if you want to use his or her name in a story. Here is one such exchange around Halloween where Kenny is asking Eric for permission to use his name in a story based upon the movie Halloween :

Kenny: "Eric, you wanna be in my story?!"

Eric: "Yeah, I want to be the murderer!"

They rehearse details of the murder together: the murder, the oxygen, the glass eye, the ax, knife or gun. Suddenly Eric leaps to his feet and performs an impromptu audition for the part. He stands and flings his arms akimbo and then stands with hands and head dangling - like a person hanging from a cross. Kenny loves it and Eric stalks toward him with a gravelly chant, "I come to chuck you, my ax!"

Clearly a second reason for using one another's names is the social dimension: one can validate or secure friendships by casting classmates in favorable roles. Friends can be won by including them in a good scene or part in an adventure story or racing event. Andy Warhol's claim that "Everyone will be famous for 15 minutes" is operable in 4G-land. Awarding a prominent role to a classmate is one way of cementing a friendship for these writers. Celebrityhood can be yours by writing a successful story with classmates' names in it and reading same in sharing time.

Steps in Writing

The social dimension of writing and sharing times took hold in class and soon it was time for more of Anita's adjustments. The problem was that the same kids were dashing off quick drafts and volunteering to share. Quantity was overpowering quality. Anita reports on this in her journal: *Sharing time needs more structuring and I'm going to preview pieces ahead of time. I* *think it may improve the quality of the writing. Children write anything. Chidren are scribbling down any old thing in order to have something to share . Right now it's status to read and competition is stiff. I'll keep alist and have 4 or 5 children read each time... People ask, "How do I get my children to share?" My problem is ,"How do you hold them back?"* (12/81) . Earlier Anita had introduced the chart given below to guide these writers through the steps in writing :

1. Write first draft
2. Have a conference with a writing partner
3. Decide how you want to change or add to your first draft
4. Write a second draft
5. Confer with a writing partner and check for capitalization, punctuation, and spelling
6. Meet with Mrs. Graves
7. Write your final draft

So the problem here was to control the enthusiasm among certain sharers so that others would have the chance to participate in sharing time and so that enough writers would be able to follow the steps all the way through and experience the complete process of composition. That was the balance she sought through the year. Since she was not responsible for generating the topics ,she could attend to the management of a writing workshop . She writes movingly on her notion of topics during Study Group: *I didn't assign writing to the* *fourth graders because my interpretation of ""The Writing Process Approach" was that children be allowed to choose their own topics. I felt this was the key to letting them claim ownership of their own writing. If a teacher never allowed a child to choose his own topics, that child could never feel he was in control of his writing. The writing would be what the teaching of writing has always been before in school. Teacher gives topic, child writes. Child tries to figure out what the teacher wants.*

Perhaps in allowing children so much freedom to choose their own topics, some children developed a mind set that they could only write when they were in control of the topic. Perhaps some degree of discipline was lost but I think the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages--especially for children in the lower grades--1 through 4. The enthusiasm which comes about, the creative energy, the thrill of setting their own thoughts down on paper. These attitudes, to me, are more important than my being able to make them write on a topic which I chose.

Another way she aided in the management of their writing and sharing time was to create a place for their final drafts to go . By the end of October, Anita felt it was time to launch the 4G Publishing Book. She does so calmly ,as is her style : *"Tom made the covers and I bought rings to put through. We have four pieces published so far. I am pointing it out as the place where* *final pieces go but I won't make too big of a deal of it since we are not after product but process. Great interest has sprung up in reading the stories of previous years. I suspect they may be enjoying them so much because they know many of the authors and they perhaps are making some comparisons. (I have Publishing Books from the previous two years.)*

By the end of the year the 4G Book held over 75 compositions that her students had "publicated". Its contents featured a wide variety of topics genres such as sports and racing stories ,mysteries and conversations in dialogues, sound effects, plays and poems.

Anita's teaching style:

Metaphors are a useful way to capture or describe the truth and in Anita's case represent her in ways shaped by who she is as a person, by what she does as a teacher and by what happens in the classroom as a result of her being there. In addition, my insights are aided by her own musings and reflections during the study as recorded in her teaching journals. So, let us now look at what metaphors can suggest about Anita's teaching style and test their fit.

Anita as becalmer. Picture a class of fourth graders in a writing workshop scene. There are seventeen students scattered throughout the classroom, some writing at their desks or on the carpet, some reading stories just written to classmates, some staring off into the distance, some on the verge of horsing around. Anita sits at the round table used for conferences, writing in her own journal, or perhaps listening to a child's story. But she is the calm in the eye of the storm--the becalmer. As a mother of grown children, and a grandmother twice that year, she is familiar with the cacaphony of children. As an experienced elementary teacher, she knows of the energy and volume levels attainabler while living for seven hours a day in a roomful of nine and ten year olds. So what does she do? She

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stays cool. She allows for what she calls the "noisy hilarious bedlam" of writing time and notes, *"I am always very aware of the social aspects of writing and so are the children. They need it and love it. It's what makes writing so much fun. Not only is it a chance to be creative but it is a chance to share this creative output immediately, if they want to. There are many choices in sharing their writing. It could be with their best friend who would always be safe. It could be with a small select group. If one were confident enough, it might mean having one's whole class as an audience, and, of course, there's always the teacher."*

Whatever their sharing or writing needs, Anita is calmly making room for them. Early in her journal she notes a process I observed her practice countless times: *"I try not to talk too much as a teacher.. It's a common mistake made in our preofession--so that when I do talk, it will have some significance."* It is within that quality of calm control that the next metaphor is offered.

Anita as manager. Anita performs as a stage manager and prefers the backstage to the limelight. Her stars are the students and she is quite content to allow them to occupy center stage while she bustles about in the wings, prompting and coaching. She is the mother hen clucking her charges into line--and she is pecking them into order. Thus, while acknowledging that writing in the context of the classroom is a highly social act, she is "socializing" her students as they work together. She writes, *"I try to keep the noise level under control by* *having specific conference spots in the room. Too much noise is not conducive to thinking and writing and that has to be taken into account. There can be no question in my mind that if all socializing were eliminated from writing, the quantity, quality and enthusiasm for writing would greatly diminish."*

Portraits of Seven Teachers

Portrait of Diane Burkhardt

Diane loves the kids she teaches. But not on the first day of school. On the first day, she's not ready to see them yet. Clouding her vision are memories of last year's kids. As she looks around her, she sees Matt arguing vehemently for the Tories; over at the round table she recalls the hours spent in conference with Margaret; where writing folders are stored, she recalls the kids who had breakthroughs in writing: Karin on the piece she wrote on her father, and Dina with the diary entries on Keith, and Brian discovering his theme of competition. It's not easy to let go of last year's kids and as she looks at the new expectant faces she wonders, "Will these kids ever be as great?"

The first weeks of school are hard for her. She misses the ease of the previous May and June, when the relationships were firm and strong. She knows arriving at that point takes time and a commitment to begin again, to let this new batch of 45 or 55 kids have an impact on her. Often in the first few weeks of school she speaks of herself as "feeling somewhat down." Then slowly, she begins to notice something. A student calls her at home about an assignment and she's pleased; she takes home a batch of process journals and finds herself becoming engrossed in the writing; she recounts a funny incident that happened at lunch and notices that she's smiling. All of a sudden she experiences the imprint of this year's kids' personalities and she knows she's on the way to building the relationships that form the basis for everything else she does in class.

To Diane, teaching is more than covering the curriculum. In fact, the curriculum (English and Social Studies and the writing and reading and speaking and listening and performing that occur as a result of it) becomes the vehicle for building the relationships that underpin her entire approach to education. She says, "I used to think teaching was performing and the teacher the main actor in the performance. But I don't view it that way anymore...I've stopped thinking of myself as a performer and the classroom as my stage. Now I think of it as my home into which 40-50 students are invited to spend a year with me, and we will get to know each other and I will learn as much as or more than they do..."

Diane's classroom, then, is a home. It's comfortable. Kids enjoy labelling sections of it. The area by the windows where Diane keeps a hot plate and a kettle has come to be called "The Kitchen." One of the windows, which when opened allows for the discarding of dirty water or the rinsing of spoons and cups is labelled "The Sink." The large open area which encompasses the middle of the room has a sign hanging from the ceiling affectionately labelling it "The Living Room." Off to the side where Diane stores the magazines of her students from previous years as well as popular paperback books and current magazines is a sign designating the area, "The Library."

Diane is so comfortable in her room she rarely leaves it. Rather than work at home, she heads for school early in the morning and often returns there at night after dinner. People looking for her know they will find her there, either working at the round table or talking with kids. In fact, adults are so accustomed to seeing Diane with kids, the one time she broke her routine in the middle of the day and visited the faculty room, people responded with surprise. Soon there were jokes and people shouting, "She's been out too long. Get her a kid to talk to quick!"

Diane takes this ribbing good-naturedly: she knows that many teachers find the number of hours she puts into teaching unusual and that many teachers make others choices. To her, though, the choice is clear. "I commit myself totally to the kids and to doing what seems necessary. One thing leads to another quite naturally. I can always think of more to do so that I can do a better job of meeting individual kid's needs. I really think I work as well, though, to satisfy myself."

Spending time with kids, working with them, watching them grow, enabling them to write and to learn, to take risks is satisfying to Diane. Much of her life revolves around students: to her the relationships don't end when the students leave her classroom or the 8th grade. She watches them perform in sports, she attends volleyball, basketball, wrestling and field hockey events. Throughout the year, former students call and write; they show up at her house or at school; they seek her advice in a crisis; they see in her someone who is committed to their growth.

To Diane, teaching involves creating an environment in which kids can grow. It means creating an environment in which kids can risk making mistakes, where being wrong is not a sign of failure but of learning, where kids are not thwarted or limited in their attempts to make meaningful discoveries. Diane bristles, however, when this description of teaching conveys the image of "a teacher collecting dust in the corner while the students do their thing." She says, "I don't want to be out of the way. I want to be with my students on the way... I want the kids to be partners with me in their own learning... I think we start off together at the beginning of the year and together we build all the experiences. It's necessary for me to be a part of that, necessary for my own survival and for what I can contribute...[and I think] when kids feel they have a stake in the class, an investment, they willingly accept responsibility."

Diane believes in her students. She thinks that all students "want to do the best they can." When there's a problem in class or something has gone wrong, she doesn't blame the students. Normally, she'll call attention to the problem and then look to see in what way she might have contributed to it. She believes the kids are capable of doing what she expects of them and that in the doing, they may well surprise her. She knows each year can never be the same because each year she and the kids will learn from one another and change. Diane is honest and serious and funny. She looks directly at students. She reveals herself to them, knowing that the most important thing she may ever teach them is to be themselves.

Portrait of Ross Burkhardt

Ross loves to perform. He shines when standing or sitting on a stool presenting an idea to a rapt audience of students. His shine turns to sparkle when he sees his students building on something he has done. For Ross sees himself as "the educational leader in the classroom," as "someone who can show the way and point out how things can or ought to be done." He knows that students may not always follow his lead, but he nonetheless finds it crucial "to set an example, to be a model."

Ross' leadership, then, works in two ways. First he is an organizer, of activities, events, schedules, deadlines, performances. He arranges things for his students: the chairs in different configurations before they enter the room and the day's activities so they'll know what they'll be doing and what he expects of them.

But he is also a participant. When his students write, he writes; when they memorize poems and recite them to the class, so does he; when each kid produces an individual magazine, he'll have produced one as well. Thus, while Ross sees himself as "running the show" and as "providing structure and direction," he is also a participant in the show.

For Ross, the classroom "is a stage set and the year a play that unfolds 180 acts on a day by day basis." As director, as "the driving force behind what happens," he controls the action. As fellow actor, he performs along with his students. As seasoned veteran of the acting stage, he often performs first to show them how it can be done.

Thus Ross "puts on a show" in all senses of the word. He is often the first to read his writing to the class, to bring in 4 drafts of a poem and talk about his strategies for revision. He says that everything he does is deliberate; the way he moves around the room, the way he talks quietly with a single student, when he gets angry and even when he "acts unconventionally." All of this is designed to create an "open and informal atmosphere where it is all right to laugh, to argue and to have a good time."

Yet, behind the stage, Ross goes through much "hand-wringing" over the best way to proceed. As early as September 15, he writes in his journal: "Creeping doubts...gnaw at my insides. Am I doing the right things? Have I gone too fast? Do the kids understand process?... How do I get kids more into writing?... How do I avoid the slap-dash approach too many of my kids used last year?"

In November: "a nagging series of questions: Is Marc's piece too long? Should I let Lee get away with his copying since it's gone this far? Is Debbie's piece too short? At what point is it appropriate to intervene in the "creation" of a piece so that I teach the child how to create/shape his/her own meaning rather than become dependent on me for help?"

Later the same month: "Will the kids' writing be good? Are they producing something "worthwhile" or just "filler"? How do you get kids to really care about what they write?"

In December: "I had the sense that writing groups were perfunctory, shallow and not really helpful. Kids on draft 2 were done in 5 minutes. I need to work on the skill of having them respond constructively... But how does one do this, and at the expense of what?"

The doubts and questions go on. Yet one morning Ross wakes to find himself amused at the discrepancy between his "off-stage" agonizing and "on-stage" performance:

> I feel not unlike Eisenhower planning D-Day -- every step a carefully measured pace toward the goal of better writing and much off-stage wringing of hands as I ponder which step of the many possible to take and why that one is "better" than another... How interesting -- the hand-wringing and agonizing indecision on my part and the apparently smooth appearance as seen by the kids...This two-faced situation with me aware of both and the kids only aware of one...Here is a drama being played out, unbeknownst to them, me trying to make the right decision, trying to think of what is best to do...and here they are, blithely unaware of how difficult it is for me, how I worry about it so. I assume that teachers in my own days as a student were in similar frames of mind from time to time, and I neither knew, noticed nor cared.

But today, as an adult and a teacher, Ross does care and he does worry. He worries about whether he has something to offer his students and whether he offers too much. He worries about controlling what his students are doing and whether he's given them so much room they are beginning to flounder. He wants to give up controlling their actions but he also wants to feel useful. He wants to perform but not to overpower.

Ross wrestles with these issues long and hard. But regardless of the role he plays in class, what is clear to him is what he wants his students to leave his class with: memories of themselves and what they've accomplished and of him. He wants to be remembered by them because memories are important to him. He loves when former students come back to reminisce about the trips they went on or the class play they performed in. Thus each year, he designs activities that involve students in creating something of their own, something memorable. It doesn't end there, though. Following a classroom activity or a school event, Ross himself will often write a poem, singling out particular students or experiences, raising as he puts it "humdrum reality to exalted status." His role as commemorator is important to him, because it allows him "to legitimize classroom events as memories" and as he says, "creating memories for kids is what a large part of my teaching is about."

Portrait of Audre Allison

Teaching gives Audre joy; that's why she does it. Not all the time, of course: some days she is too tired to feel joyful -- or too discouraged; some days she rages between classes, or cries, or feels like quitting. But teaching English, for her, allows always for the possibility of joy.

"What are my goals?" she asks herself in her journal. "To make new discoveries... Of course I could begin to list concrete and obvious goals but the immediate motivation is sheer pleasure..." Pleasure. Joy. The words reverberate through Audre's journals. She wants her days, and her students' days, to be full of joy: the joy of exploration, the joy of discovery; in particular, and inextricably entwined with these, the joys of reading and writing.

For reading and writing are lifeblood to Audre: not disembodied skills, useful merely for school or for getting jobs, but at the core of a fully lived life. She is nourished by words; sustained, liberated by words. She would wither without them. Her journal overflows with metaphors for the pleasure of writing: she compares it to playing jazz, to walking on the beach, to cooking, to dancing, to riding a bicycle, to breastfeeding a baby; she speaks of writing groups as "assisting at a birth." When she jumps out of bed in the middle of the night to write a poem, she tells her students why she did it: "for my pleasure of course." She writes, in class, about novels she is reading at home (and about the frustration of not having enough time to read them); reads stories and poems out loud, letting her voice follow the rhythm of a line, pausing to laugh out loud at a well-turned phrase or to repeat and savor a well-chosen word. "Ms. Allison gets high on words," says Steve, and then is embarrassed when I quote him. But Audre is pleased. "'Words are my life,'" she quotes from Emily Dickinson, and writes it on the blackboard. Reading and writing are important, she says, not just for school but "to make a human being."

She wants her students to know the pleasure of writing and reading; to be able to give it to themselves, as she does. "The ability to generate our own pleasure -- how strong and courageous it makes one feel." So she looks more closely, and asks herself, "Where does the pleasure come from?" She studies students who already write to give themselves pleasure: Cumhur, who speaks of his writing "caressingly... as if describing a treasured instrument"; Sue W., who writes, she tells Audre, "to discover and construct myself." Exploration and discovery: yes. That rings true for Audre. She knows it herself: that the joy lies not so much in what is discovered as in the process of discovery itself.

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For that is where Audre's own joy lies -- in search and discovery. Her journals are full of unfinished pieces, glorious searches which end in discovery and are then abandoned; the joy, to use an image she has used herself, not in the treasure but in the hunt. She writes to surprise herself, to discover what she knows; takes off in pursuit of ideas as yet unexpressed, her pen "scattering gems" (as she has written pens can do) on the page, or spreading what she has called "a secret solution on invisible ink" until the message appears: "that 'aha' moment." She gives her students the line from E.M. Forster, "how do I know what I think until I see what I say?" It's the process that counts for her. "That's where the joy is found -- in the doing -- the creating -- There is something so much more basic in its value than in the value of a product."

Of course she wants the products to be wonderful too, and is delighted when they are -- and they often are; but it is her students' right to make their own discoveries that she will fight for. Better a product full of flaws than one which has been "improved" by a teacher; one which has been "stuffed into" someone else's form to suit someone else's purpose; one which answers someone else's question. She steadfastly refuses to choose topics for students, direct their revising, edit their vocabularies. When Steve M. says, "I changed it the way you told me..." Audre responds, with a horrified expression, "Are you accusing me of telling you what to do with your writing?" When Sandra asks for help in pruning the lush growth of her vocabulary, Audre listens sympathetically but refuses to make final decisions. "I've never understood teachers who say, 'Cut out all that garbage,'" she comments in her journal. "It takes the learning away from the student."

Portrait of Len Schutzman

"I love to write and to work with students who are writing," Len writes in his journal. "Teaching writing allows for a kind of growth in the classroom I have rarely experienced before... Teaching writing [last year] allowed me to grow and the students each to grow and the class..." Writing, as Len sees it, can lead to growth, and growth is what he cares about.

Len loves to care for and nurture young growing things: a garden, small children, babies. He loved teaching third grade, and still, last year, missed it; loves being the father of two small children. He has studied child development, taught it (as a course for high school students); delights in seeing, as his own children grow, the unfolding of a story he knows well. He talks about his children in class, and writes about them in a special journal he keeps for himself but intends, eventually, to give to them: a record of their growth, and of his as their father.

Len's focus on growth allows him to pick up emotional undercurrents in the lives of his students. When he looked at his 12th grade English class last year he saw young human beings growing. Seniors, he wrote, are "rejecting the school and trying to form a new identity. But that is only a part of the tension in these seniors, they are also trying to hold on to what they know and are familiar with..." In a piece he shared with the students he was writing about, he compared them to his year-old son, who would throw his bottle to the floor, wait for his parents to pick it up, hold on to it for a while, then throw it to the floor again. "He holds on and then lets go and holds on and lets go and works out a whole series of complex relationships through this game." Len saw, beneath the calm, competent, almost grown up surfaces of his seniors, adolescents (once, in a slip of the pen, quickly corrected, "children"), trying, like the child in all of us, to let go and hold on at the same time. But because he saw the adult in his students, too, and taught to it, he offered them a chance to write instead of a bottle to throw. "Writing allows them to explore both sides of these issues," he wrote. A piece of writing can be "a place where these issues can be explored and the tension released through exploration."

Writing, to Len, is often and perhaps most powerfully an exploration and a record of growth. The literature he chose to teach last year -- Hamlet, Hemingway's In Our Time, fairy tales -- he interpreted in terms of underlying themes and symbols of growth. When some students balked at the Freudian interpretations of fairy tales Len finds "correct" and "insightful" (red roses as symbols of menstrual blood, or small furry animals as small furry vaginas), Len was amused but sympathetic: in writing their own fairy tales, he found, most "somehow missed the point... had no real idea about

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resolution of conflict or growth. They especially didn't understand inner conflict I guess because they are so conflicted themselves and are defending against that as strongly as possible..."

So students' personal writing became, for Len, a more promising avenue to explore. Writing, in Len's words, "allows the student to look inside and to express that knowledge and refine it and enjoy the expression of it. It allows for an openness of exchange and a truthfulness...." Teaching writing, then, became for Len a natural way of helping his seniors work through the ambivalence about growing up (the struggle to do it, and faltering progress towards adulthood) which seemed to him to be the true subject of 12th grade English -- the one that underlay whatever else the students were writing about. As Teresa said, looking back on a varied sample of her written work, "I realized that everything I wrote last year was about growing up." Len agreed, seeing senior year sometimes as one long "rite of passage" (his phrase); giving the seniors chance after chance to write their way through it. Of the senior essay, a long project, the last of the year, he wrote, "it says to the class that graduation is hard, it takes a long time, it works its way through your being slowly and in mysterious ways and here is one more ceremony for you to participate in before the final march." At the end of the year, in his journal, he mused about his students, asking himself if each one had written the piece he or she needed to write -- the one leading towards growth.

Teresa, as a case study subject, was a natural choice for Len. She hated writing at the beginning of the year, had become fiercely a writer by the end; went through about five years' worth of growth in a single ten-month period. At times she seemed to be a barometer of the class, her exposed nerve endings registering every subtle shift in its emotional temperature; always, she was extraordinarily sensitive to her own inner states and able to describe them: a worthy partner for Len in the study of growth. Skittish at first, she let herself be calmed by Len; let herself gradually come to trust him and to depend on his skilled listening. When she came back to the high school last fall, in the throes of a rough transition to Suffolk Community College, she was afraid to go and see Len because she knew that as soon as she started to talk to him she would begin to cry. "She knew she would cry," Len reported in his journal, "because she could envision the kind of discussion we would have. Part of that is just me but part of it is the context in which Teresa knew me. As her writing teacher she saw me as an honest and open being ready to listen to what she had to say and willing to give her the space in which to say it."

Len gave Teresa space, and listened to her. He listened to the other seniors, too, even the four failing students for whom he formed a special class. The regular class "never was non-threatening enough for them," he wrote in his journal, and made sure the special one would be. He sat around a table with these four, facing a pile of greasy valves, and let them teach him about auto mechanics while he taught them about patience.

Again and again, Len supported students' growth by calling to everyone's attention moments in which it was made visible. He often thanked students for asking crucial question or for taking risks; Teresa's end-of-the-year cartoon showed him, all glasses and moustache, saying, "Thank you for being brave."

And he supported growth, perhaps most forcefully, by participating in it. As he learned to play the violin alongside his daughter, he struggled with each new piece of writing, through all the revision, alongside his students. The growth he wanted for them he wanted -- and wants -- for himself as well. At the end of the year, looking back, he wrote of this class as "special...we did break through some barriers. The honesty was there not all the time or from all the kids but in moments fleeting and brave and we all grew from those moments."

Portrait of Reba Pekala

Reba's first grade classroom is a cornucopia of stimuli. Colorful posters, math games, puzzles, record players, mobiles, seedlings sprouting for the garden, books, and writing supplies spill out around the students. This design is in harmony with Reba's role as teacher. She fashions a stimulating environment for her students and perceives herself as a motivating force -- a "kindler" of learning. Her part is to encourage individual growth.

Reba herself freely admits her own reservations about writing. As a writer she is shy and hesitant, uncomfortable with the role. As a teacher, however, she wants her students to "enjoy writing and feel free to express their thoughts without fears of being unable or inadequate." Writing is a form of communication, she writes, which enables her students to "become individuals with a sense of self-worth." Through writing, she hopes, they will gain a confidence she does not have herself.

As a classroom teacher Reba has definite ideas about where writing fits in her curriculum. She recognizes it as one activity in a day crammed with many other curricular demands: "Writing definitely intermixes with all language arts. However, so do cursive writing, grammar, sight words, workbooks, reading series, motorskill, math, social studies, science, listening skill, and most of all, 'learning how to learn.'" Thus, she initially addresses the constraint of having to position writing in her diverse curriculum and plans on "only 40 minutes an average of three times a week." By the middle of December, however, she has expanded writing time to four or five days a week and as much as an hour per session, responding to signals from students who, even before they were out of their coats, had started to draw and write at the beginning of each school day.

So Reba works with her students -- keen to their individual learning paces. Her teaching journal is laced with assessments of their developments and of what she is doing to spark them along. When Jeremy flounders after an early spate of producing only first drafts, she writes: "Jeremy didn't share today. I'm really not sure how to light a fire under him. He does write when there is an assigned topic, but somehow it doesn't seem to be going anywhere." When Denise moves from careful drawings to her first words, Reba compliments her stories and directs her to classmates' stories written at a slightly more advanced stage.

Sometimes Reba wonders if she is pushing her students too much. In January she observes, "It's hard to wait for them to adopt new things in their writing and I seem to be unconsciously rushing some kids. Occasionally, I step back and remember that we are just beginning to really read for comprehension. It always seems to work out in the end -- just that I keep rushing things. I need to slow down my eagerness and put my efforts into those 3-4 kids who are just at the edge of understanding in reading."

Sometimes, as an enthusiastic orchestrator of learning, Reba's own energy flags. After typing up 22 thank-you books her first graders had composed for the Middle School students who had been visiting their class, she reached a breaking point: "I'm getting tired of typing books every night -- it's been almost two years now. I really feel that if my enthusiasm is low -- which is happening -- then it must affect my students. I'm not tired of writing but this class might be reached or spurred on by a different and new mode."

She continues, trying another approach: "I'm not going to give them booklets to write in -- from now on, they will only write on lined paper -- pictures if they want. But I won't have just 5-6 page booklets, for these limit how long the stories are to be. Loose paper will hopefully let the children be free to make their stories as long as they want. Beginning, middle, and ends will be their choices -- not to just end on the last page of a little booklet."

Reba connects her enthusiasm or lack of it to her students' enjoyment in learning. If things are not going well she will tinker toward a solution. If eagerness and enthusiasm are not part of the learning process, something needs fixing.

By year's end, this class of 14 first graders has produced over 140 books. Reba believes that teaching writing should be as much fun as learning writing. When it is not stimulating, something is wrong. The process approach is flexible enough for Reba to account for pacing and procedural problems and not shortchange the enjoyment inherent in an elementary classroom. Using the process approach to teach writing lets Reba match results to goals: to help her students improve as writers and to enjoy it while they do.

Portrait of Anita Graves

Three times a week seventeen fourth graders return from lunch and recess to write in their journals. For at least an hour they compose, conference, revise, "publicate", and prepare for sharing time. Here Tom and Cindy and Rich sit lost in thought. There Maureen and Kevin and Sharon flop variously on the carpeted steps and stage floor. Others read and discuss stories in groups. Eric, red hair and blue eyes flashing, springs across the room to preview his story with John and Matt. Mrs. Graves meets with with Kenny B. at the roundtable over his latest piece. Here too is the class publication, also known as the 4-G Book, which grows steadily. By year's end its oversized oak tag pages hold over 75 stories, poems, reports, etc., -- literally a "three ring" circus of fourth grade compositions.

Anita's role is that of a managing editor in this workshop atmosphere. She is comfortable in channeling learning activities in directions her students' interests and experiences indicate. She doesn't suffer from a proprietary investment in what her students write. She cares only that they feel good about writing. She acknowledges, "Children need lots of chances to be creative in school: writing is one way."

In Anita's class writers choose what they write, who they write to, and which mode they write in. Writers decide how long to stay with a particular piece and when to start a new one. Her message rang clear from the second day on: "This journal is yours, as is the choice whether to share it or not". Ownership is granted, even expected, in this elementary classroom.

For some teachers it would be threatening not to know what students are doing or writing. For some it assaults egos and rattles pedagogical bulwarks. Not so for Anita. For her not to know most of what her students are writing in their journals is a sign of trust. As a teacher she has the "strength of her convictions", to give up control over what her students write, and to get out of the way of their writing.

Yet control is important. What matters to Anita is that the machinery of learning chug along smoothly. When it doesn't, she "manages" to step in. She writes in her teaching journal:

> Things are reaching the point where something will have to be done about censorship. The status thing is to have your name mentioned in a risque setting with pants falling down, zippers getting stuck, exploding bras, etc. I realize this is all part of their T.V. and movie viewing but it could cause a problem with parents. I shall just have to say that

> these things embarrass me and that it's time to write about other things. It gets boring to hear the same kind of humor all the time (ha!)...
>
> ...I talked this morning about censorship. I told them that they were on the verge of embarrassing me and I suggested there were many other ways of writing humor and lots of other funny things besides pants falling down and exploding bras. They knew exactly what I was talking about. (Oct. 9,13)

Since Anita keeps her hands off their journals during journal writing time, the theme of ownership spills over into their written work in other subjects like Math, Science, and Social Studies. While creating their own addition and subtraction word problems for a nearby class of third graders, Anita's fourth graders treated the composing of these math problems as if they were journal pieces headed toward publication. First they drafted a problem, conferenced with a partner, revised accordingly, then did another draft, and met with their teacher for editing.

On another occasion, Anita returned from the local store with feed for Rocky, the class rabbit, and with a big rodent poster-calendar given to her by the store owner. The poster inspired the students to write reports on their favorite rodents. Soon seventeen different and informative treatments of rats, squirrels, beavers, mice, and guinea pigs were produced.

And when Mrs. Chan visited to help bake almond cookies for the UNICEF cookie sale the class was planning, she ended up talking with them about Chinese family customs and Chinese pictographs. This led to a spontaneous spate of "Chinese Reports", (which didn't quite align itself with the prescribed fourth grade Social Studies curriculum, which features Long Island history).

In choosing to be a managing editor, Anita's stance is significant for what she does not do. Anita does not scotch student enthusiasm for adventurous departures. Nor does she collect journals to evaluate them or read them uninvited. She does not choose the pieces writers will publish nor decide who will have a conference with her. She does not hand out topics nor prescribe particular modes.

What she does do is free studnts to be authors. She manages a setting for students to make their own choices and respects and guides accordingly. She encourages, supports, and acts as a benevolent control for this community of writers.

Anita, the teacher, has learned from Anita, the student. As a child she knew teachers who "ran hot and cold", who promised more than they could deliver. As a teacher she has "resolved to be as consistent as possible and let children know in concrete terms what I expect of them and to promise nothing I can not keep." She has also learned that "often teachers talk too much" and now tries to "explain things as briefly and concisely as possible."

She sees herself as "a practical realist" and describes her role as a facilitator: "My relationship was more utilitarian -- 'How can I help you?' 'What do you need?'; She models the writing process from such an orientation. When her students need a boost in revision skills she demonstrates by revising her own composition, "Barney's Walk on the Beach".

Anita's style is reactive; responsive. She writes, "I am not a person who can plan very far ahead. I like living in the present and then doing what seems like the natural next step."

She does the practical. When several students are stuck in writing one first draft after another, she models ways to write a series of drafts based on a paper she has just prepared for a presentation to the Suffolk County Reading Council.

Anita prompts from the cues from her students. That is her style of management and control. She is guided, therefore, both by their needs and by her own desire to keep things moving.

Portrait of Bill Silver

"Mr. Silver, can I write about rainbows?"
"Should I do a piece on Halloween?"
"Is this good enough now, Mr. Silver?"

"What do you think? It's up to you."

Bill's answer to these common questions from his fourth and fifth graders is typical. It addresses a goal central to his teaching: that of "developing independent, competent, caring students." Bill champions independence and responsibility and gives his students frequent opportunities to "plan their own schedules, decide when to do things, and be responsible for their own progress." During a five week cycle of writing ending with the Christmas vacation break, for instance, he asked students to pace themselves on selecting topics, conferencing, revising, and editing. Bill's function throughout was to support them while they wrote, and to help them meet their agreed-upon deadlines.

As a classroom teacher Bill is drawn primarily to the writer, not the writing. While he believes that his students should have "control over part of their lives and exercise that control responsibly, it is a student's overall attitude, confidence, maturity, sense of humor, sassiness" that attracts him first. Yet he notes with mild chagrin one evening in his journal this discovery: "I read all their memory stories tonight and my three most interesting kids (Kelly, Andria and Chris D.) had some of the most boring stories."

Bill is conversant with contradictions as an elementary teacher using a writing process approach. His journal is full of reflections on the paradoxes of teaching, and of his wrestling with his role(s) in his students' lives. Here he looks at the relationship between his motivational instincts and his students' investments in writing:

> We can prepare them, push them, give them time, anything to help them get started and analyze what they produce -- but the bottom line is that the piece is theirs, and they will either care or not. Probably getting kids invested in writing is like getting them invested in any of their work -- some inspiration, some perspiration, and a lot of nagging...I really thing that in the long run the best writing comes from themselves -- their topics, ideas, and forms -- not from provisions I make.

He is also concerned with the quality of what his students write:

> The writing is yours, not mine. I can make demands, set deadlines, require revision and editing, but unless you want to do these things, want your writing to be good and real and interesting to you and to others, nothing good will come out: you'll feel badly, I'll be angry, and then no one will be happy. But if you take control, write about things you care about so that you want to make them good, then everyone will be happy.

While respecting students' varying composing timetables, he grapples with the complexities of pacing:

> The thing that I find most frustrating is the continual battle over having things completed. When half the class doesn't have drafts done, or never freewrites, or does a draft and then doesn't look at it for a week -- these make it hard to do anything with continuity. I feel like it's all starts and stops, like a broken car. I can get some parts fixed, but then something else doesn't work, and there's just more aggravation.

Bill will do a lot of starting them off. He'll launch into Social Studies timelines, begin memory stories, try tongue twisters, initiate free-writing sessions, and play with brainstorming. Here he examines metaphorically (and with some humor) his own process of teaching:

> Patient progress -- sounds trite, but similar to planting a garden. Dropping hints here and there, nurturing, providing food for thought, lots of exposure (but not too much), patiently helping to weed out bad or unhelpful ideas, thoughts, biases, beliefs about their writing; pushing just enough (sun) for warmth and positiveness, enough somewhat negative criticism (gentle rain!) to nudge ahead, but mostly just waiting, patiently for all the good things I've put in to result in products and processes I (they) can take out. And taking those products in a way that encourages further growth, not stopped growth or regression (like lettuce leaves -- always take them from the outside, so the inside can keep growing), and then waiting again for the next step to take...letting the roots get deeper...Publishing, having "flower shows", "county fairs"...Borrowing ideas (seeds) from each other, giving each

other support and advice and pointing out errors.

Permit me my own stream of consciousness sketch of Bill. Yes, he is that pruner-gardener, that nurturer in the jungle of his students' learning processes. He is also a chameleon who adapts his teaching styles to suit his students' needs, as his article on conferencing in Elementary School Journal attests. He is mercurial -- a quick-Silver in the classroom. He teaches out of who he is. He laughs aloud and gets angry; he's gentle and then he's strict. He is oxymoronic in temperament. He models in his teaching what he hopes for in his students' writing -- that each will strive for a responsible, quality-conscious commitment to their time together.

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Section 2

Products

Classroom Research by the Teachers in the Study

EXPLORING THE COMPOSING PROCESS WITH EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS

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EXPLORING THE COMPOSING PROCESS WITH EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS

For me, teaching is very much like a journey. I look back at where I've been, and although I have a general idea of the road I want to follow for the immediate future, I know that I can't possibly anticipate the discoveries and experiences that lie ahead. And so it is with the topic of this paper. I can very easily trace the course of events in the past three years that brings me to my present knowledge and understanding of how eighth grade students document their composing process. I know that what I did last year was a result of the previous year and that my approach with my present students is informed by the experiences of last year. Next year will undoubtedly bear the marks of this year's discoveries.

If you seek definitive answers you should stop reading at this point. I still don't know the answer to the question that is responsible for my foray into the composing process of eighth graders: Can my students find the same value in documenting and discussing their composing processes that I have found for myself? One of the most exciting discoveries I made in July, 1979 during my NWP summer institute was that I had a composing process. Keeping a journal in which I wrote about the things that happened as I wrote (or didn't write) was valuable to me. Hearing fellow 'writers' read from their process journals only to find that others often shared the same frustrations and joys in writing was equally valuable.

Thus, process journals became a requirement for my students. They wrote about how they wrote and shared these entries in class. I read and responded to what they wrote in their process journals. But in neither 1979/80 nor 1980/81 did I feel satisfied with the results. Nor did my students if their end-of-the-year evaluations were any indication. "Why do we do this? or "I hated writing process entries; it's a waste of time." In June, 1981 I wrote about this in my journal as I evaluated the year in English.

> *I let down on process journals again this year, I think. There should have been more feedback, more group sharing, more work done to help kids improve and understand better* ***why*** *they keep an account of their process and how to benefit from it. I became over-involved in developing excellent writing groups. Writing gropps and process journals could have had an equal emphasis, but didn't. This is something I definitely want to stay on top of next year. I won't know what's possible until I really work at it.*

From the beginning of the 1981/82 school year my goal was to communicate with my students my own sense of excitement in the discovery of one's own process. Via their process journals I began a dialogue with each student in which I not only commented and responded to what they wrote, but also emphasized exploring the many facets of their composing processes.

> To Brian on October 10 I wrote: *As you begin to use this process journal more, I hope you will EXPLORE your own unique individual composing process. Try to be aware of things that happen while you write that you have never been aware of before. This will not always be the same kind of thing. I don't expect all process entries to be the same. In fact, if they were, I'd begin to worry.*

I also commented on the variety of ways in which to use the process journal.

> To Kathy on October 20, I wrote: *I can easily understand the point you were making in class earlier today about the annoyance of writing process entries. Your entries are chock-a-block full of information. It seems that you have left out no detail of your revision and why you made the changes. From a teacher's point of view, it's very interesting and informative .....BUT I can see that it might be a pain to remember all the points.*
>
> *If you use this journal at natural stopping points, if you begin your work on a piece by jotting down some notes and thoughts in here, and if you jot down a few more things after you finish -- then maybe doing a process journal entry won't seem to be such an intrusion or a pain.*
>
> *It's probably hard for you to ever write anything that's not in complete sentences and perfectly neat, but if you wanted to just jot down words, phrases, partial sentences, etc. that would be perfectly all right.*
>
> *The general idea of this journal is for you to EXPLORE all the different types of things that happen as you think about a piece, as you write it, revise it, etc. That's why there can be no one set way of writing process entries. I'm trying to promote freedom and a sense of adventure in discovering lots of new points about how you yourself compose.*

As students wrote and revised pieces to include in our first publication of the year, they wrote frequently in their process journals. My responses to several students follow.

> To Diane, October 12, 1981: *I hope you'll like using your process journal to EXPLORE the way you write. In class today I talked a bit about the exploration theory of process entries. What I mean is to focus on what we discover each time about how we get ideas and how we make choices and decisions as we write. We are constantly making choices that we aren't even aware of. The trick is to become more tuned in to all those things we aren't really aware of. Sounds hard, huh? Actually it's fun!*

> To Matt, October 17: *Everytime we share process entries in class, you have a lot of interesting points to make. It seems to me that you do pay attention to lots of things that happen while you are writing a piece even though you say you can't. What I think is most interesting is the new things you discover each time you write a piece.*

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To Margaret, October 27: *I'm tremendously impressed with the way use your process journal for a variety of purposes. Sometimes you plan; sometimes you evaluate what you have already written; sometimes you describe yourself writing (what I would see if I were there), sometimes you describe your thoughts, mood, etc. It seems that you truly use this as an aid to your composing of your piece.*

The following excerpts from my own teaching journal show my "ups and downs" about process journals.

MY JOURNAL, OCTOBER 28, 1981: Last night I really liked reading and responding to process entries. I think some kids are beginning to explore and feel free about it. I've been trying to let them do whatever they want and use my comments to direct them to additional possibilities. One thing I'd like each to try is to write in the P.J. before beginning a piece. Very few do this despite suggestions from me. How directive should I be? Maybe it's o.k. to direct just to get them to try it.

MY JOURNAL, DECEMBER 9: This (a point of view piece on a short story by Edgar Allen Poe) was the first piece we've written since the magazines were published. I asked them to begin this piece in their process journals, then switch to other paper at whatever point they are ready to write the piece. Lots of questions and comments. "How do you do that?" "That's dumb". "Why do that?" I explained my desire to have them focus particlar attention on what happens as they begin to think about 'an assignment'.

MY JOURNAL, JANUARY 13, 1982: Reading through process journals this afternoon before coming home I became very discouraged. I asked myself, "Why do kids keep process journals?" It seems like pulling teeth. Can they even be expected to do it? As much as I've tried to 'free them up' from what they think it means to keep track of one's composing process, I'm afraid I've over-corrected. All those I read this afternoon sounded the same -- at least I think they did. I wrote "nice", long responses to each with many questions that would (if they were answered) inform me about their composing processes. I feel the need to speak individually with kids about these questions and the role and importance of keeping track of one's process.

MY JOURNAL, JANUARY 15: Too many kids seem to be using their process journals simply for a sort of pre-writing/planning purpose. I realize that I've caused that by the emphasis in the last several entries. But does that mean they're trying to write to please me and to satisfy what they think are my expectations? Is it possible to get more than Margaret and Chrissy to see a value for themselves in keeping a journal about their writing process?

What is the value of it? Why should they be interested in it? How will it actually help them? It's not enough to tell them that it's interesting for me to know or that they might learn things that will help others. They have to see it as personally useful. But why do they want to know any more about themselves as writers? Why should I try to get everyone to use process journals for themselves? I haven't really thought about whether it is a good thing or not. Implicitly I believe that it is. But now I wonder about this? At what point should I 'give up'?

At the same time that I was feeling this despaire about whether my students would ever find personal value in documenting their composing processes, a friend shared with me an assignment that she had given to her CUNY Basic Writers who had kept process journals throughout their semester's compostion course. She had asked them to re-read their entire process journal and write a 'research paper' entitled, "What I now Know About Myself as a Writer". The idea intrigued me. If my students were to re-read their process journals would they see growth in themselves as writers? Would they see repetitive patterns in the way they compose pieces or in the way they approach revisions? What would they be able to learn from what they had written since September? On January 20, I gave them this assignment even though I was a bit apprehensive about the results. In my journal that day I wrote:

> *(My Journal, January 20): It seems so obvious now that the kids will not be able to do what I asked them to do. Do they know what it means to find out about themselves as writers? How many will say, "I don't know anything." I think I rushed into this too quickly. It would have been good to plan it as an in-class activity -- have them re-read their process journals and make notes. They could have interacted with me and with each other. If they started the writing in class it could have been finished at home. Oh, well. It's too late now. Mainly I just hope they're honest.*

In the two class periods that followed we shared and discussed what they had written. Much to my relief everyone had been able to do the assignment. Some found it easy, others found it difficult, and others found it to be just 'different'. What they wrote varied greatly. No one wrote quite as extensively as Margaret who wrote 8 pages. By looking at what she had written before, during, and after the writing of various pieces and revisions, she was able to list a number of things which she had learned about herself as a writer.

> *FROM MARGARET'S PROCESS JOURNAL, JANUARY 20: I like to do 'freewriting' in here before I start to write a piece. It helps me to clear the junk out of my mind. It helps me to settle down..........*
>
> *I like to use my process journal to plan what's going to happen in my piece....*
>
> *I think it's good that I write my frustrations about how a piece is going in here because if I stop myself from worrying about a piece, I won't try hard enough, I won't like it and I'll be ashamed.*
>
> *I know where I like to be when I write. I know I want to be alone, and I don't want to be under pressure.*
>
> *I never realized before how complicated the process of writing a piece is. I know now that the process journal is really helping me.*
>
> *I've learned my process for getting my pieces the way they are so I will like them. All of a sudden this year I've gotten interested in writing. I would just like to say that I get many joys out of writing -- not so much joy, but satisfaction. The satisfaction of knowing I worked hard on my piece, I'm proud of it, and other people like it too.*

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> *There are certain points when I'm stuck and then I get an idea and the feeling I get is such relief that it is in a way a JOY. The way ideas come to me sometimes gives me JOY if that's what you would call it. Put it this way -- when the knot in my stomach unties, it's JOY.*

Matt D. wrote that he had learned at least two things about himself as a writer that surprised him. First,that he was conscious of his spelling and second, that he was more worried than he had realized about what others might think of his writing. Jimmy K. wrote angrily about how dumb he felt as part of a 'special' English class for the 6th and 7th grades and how insecure he felt about his writing skills as a result.

> *(FROM JIM K's. JOURNAL, JANUARY 20: Re-reading this lets me see that I'm always worried if what I write will be right. I'm afraid to write much.*

Excerpts from several other students' "What I Now Know About Myself As a Writer" pieces follow along with my responses to what they wrote.

> *FROM CHRISSY T'S JOURNAL, JANUARY 20: ...I think that my process journal really helps me to learn about my writing, and now I understand what it is supposed to be used for. I have to be honest thought and say that I don't really enjoy writing process. It bores me to death. But I know that if I want to learn about how I write, I must write process.*

to which I responded:

> *Chrissy--Are you sure there isn't a conflict here? You find it helpful, but don't like writing it. Sounds like the typical approach to some distasteful medicine: "Take it because it's good for you."*
>
> *Well, my goal is that your process journal would be more than medicine, that it would be something you want to do because it's helpful, valuable, even necessary at times.*
>
> *Maybe you should stop writing your entries after you finish a piece. Maybe you should try just writing before or little bits here and there while you're witing a piece (at natural stops or pauses). Free yourself from complete sentences, from neatness. Just write words or phrases. What would it be like for you to try these suggestions? I'm not urging messiness for the sake of messiness, but I'm searching for suggestions (no matter how trivial) that may help you view writing process as fun, or as a comfort, or as a release or as an exciting discovery.*

> *FROM MATT S.' JOURNAL, JANUARY 20: From looking at this (process journal) I mostly found that I don't like it. I could tell by the way the leters are big LIKE THIS and pretty sloppy. That means I do it just to get it over with and mostly so I won't see on my report card, "Matt failed to complete 11 process entries". In other words -- I'm not doing this for me, but only for you.*

If I had wanted honesty, I certainly got it from Matt. I wrote back to him:

Dear Matt-- If you've been listening in class you know you're not alone with how you feel about writing in your p.j. I just hope that you and everyone else will keep an open mind and keep trying to use the journal as an aid in understanding how you write.

FROM SCOTT'S PROCESS JOURNAL, JANUARY 20: .....I can't really write about my composing process because as I just found out by re-reading my process journal, I don't write about my composing process when I write a process entry. So I just really found out that I've been doing it wrong!

Dear Scott-- I just carefully re-read all of your process journal. I don't know why you feel that you've been wrong. There is no WRONG way, just as there is not one magic RIGHT WAY. To me the most important point about your process journal is that you use it in a way that is truly helpful, valuable, even necessary for your writing. When your p.j. is helpful to you, then you know you're doing it RIGHT.

These two class periods in which we shared and discussed what they had learned or realized in re-reading their process journals represent a clear turning point in the year for many students. In my journal I wrote about the honesty of what many kids had shared, and thought about the best way to proceed.

MY TEACHING JOURNAL, JANUARY 21: Will today's discussion be significant in terms of what happens next for some kids? any kids? one kid? I was impressed with the honesty today. Brian said that he lied about his process in the beginning of the year because he thought he had to do it in a certain way. Mike S. said what he realized when he read his p.j. was that he was writing it to please me. Matt S. had realized something similar. A lot of kids mention that they're sure they do it 'wrong'. English B's discussion continued into lunchtime with Matt D. being concerned that I might be upset at things people had said about not liking their process journals, not finding them useful,, etc. I'm not sure he understood what I meant when I told him it would be more upsetting NOT to hear these things. I can deal with most anyhhing that I know about.

* * * **

At the beginning of tomorrow's class I plan to say that they have a choice to make about their process journals. They know now (I think) that their p.j. is mainly for themselves, not for me. (Do they know this or is it more accurate to say they've been told this?)

The choice they have right now is to use the p.j. in such a way that it is helpful to them, OR to have it be a chore, bore, a drag.

Assuming that they'd like to choose to make it useful and meaningful for themselves, how can I help them? by modelling? by typing up several entries from their peers' process journals? I'll ask them what they think would be most useful.

At lunch today, Margaret expressed her bewilderment that the value of keeping a process journal is questioned now, not earlier. She asks, "Haven't you been making comments in their journals and asking them questions since September? Why don't they just follow your suggestions *or try answering your questions? Why would they do it this long if they didn't like it? Why do I find it so useful, and they don't?"*

FROM MY JOURNAL, JANUARY 22: Today at the beginning of class I read what I had written in my journal last night -- the part about the choice that is theirs right now, and asking their suggestions for what would be helpful. Most felt that "models" or "samples" would be good. So, over the weekend I will type up some entries from their process journals. I think it would be good to take something from everyone's journal if I can.

I also mentioned in class that there seemed to be three categories of people on the issue of p.j.'s: (1) those who do it for themselves and find it really useful (a minority!); (2) those who like the journal and don't mind writing in it, but don't find it useful, valuable, necessary, etc.; (3) and those who do it merely because it _must_ *be done, who write it only to please me, etc. They find it a drag.*

Jeff said, "Mrs. B, I'm in the second category, but I really want to be in the first one, and I would appreciate any help you can give me."

FROM MY JOURNAL, JANUARY 24: I have been obsessed with process journals throughout the weekend. I even watched very little of the Super Bowl!!!!!! The feeling I've had is a very good one. I have worked with a passion for the task. I was pleasantly surprised by what several kids had written -- very touched by some of what was shared. I've had little sleep but feel tremendous energy. I've been driven to read and respond quite carefully/thoroughly to all the "What I Know About Myself as a Writer" pieces and then to look for a variety of entries to type up. I guess I'm waging war or something, but with guerrilla tactics rather than heavy artillery.

One of the forces driving me has been my desire to be ready first thing tomorrow with some examples of entries and p.j.'s to return. I'm ready and that feels good. I must not get my hopes too high for "results". It's a personal and individual thing for each kid.

NOTE: EXCERPTS FROM PROCESS JOURNALS which was distributed in class on Monday, January 25 is attached as APPENDIX A

"EXCERPTS FROM PROCESS JOURNALS" which was distributed in class the following Monday represented a rather extensive selection of entries from the process journals of at least thirty students. I organized them according to the following topics: BEFORE WRITING--GENERAL, BEFORE WRITING--PLANNING, WHILE WRITING, AFTER WRITING, and REVISING. Under each category I included a variety of approaches. I wanted them to see that rather than there being one set way to document one's composing process, that in fact there were many different ways. As they read the excerpts in class I wrote the following comment in my journal: *"There has been 25 minutes of utter silence — a deep silence which settles in and envelops the room. It's what happens everytime they read things written by each other."* As an assignment for the next day's class, I asked that they write their reaction to having read the excerpts. The reactions of five students follow:

> *From Tom H., January 25: I never thought of using the process journal in the way others do. In seventh grade I was introduced to it and I thought or I was taught that it was a homework assignment to do after your piece was finished. I never ever thought that it could be used to start a story during the story. Now I'm going to try to use these techniques for my next piece. This really did help me and I think it also helped others.*
>
> *FROM DAWN, JANUARY 25: I really like that little booklet you put together. I think this will really help me. A lot of the stuff in the BEFORE WRITING part are things that go through my mind, but I never even thought of writing them down.*
>
> *FROM DIANE, JANUARY 25: I was interested to see how other people felt and worked out problems that are the same as the ones I have. While I was reading I would say, "Yeah! That happens to me." or "I know what you mean." I used to have only one view on the way I wrote. Reading these entries helped me to think of how other people might write.*
>
> *FROM CHRISSY, JANUARY 25: I now see the many other techniques to use in writing process. I have always thought I should write in complete sentences and explain things fully. I am going to try something different next time. I really would like to use my process journal to help me. I don't like making it a chore.*
>
> *FROM KARIN, JANUARY 25: I always wondered if I did my p.j. wrong. Now I see that there is no wrong way. Everyone has their own way of doing it.*

I wrote earlier of these classes in January as a critical turning point for many students. Documenting their composing processes continued to be a requirement for all students during each of our composition units for the remainder of the school year. And most students found something valuable in writing frequently about their composing process. They used their journals for planning specific pieces, for writing ideas for future pieces, for working out problems within a piece, for evaluating how they felt about an idea or a completed piece. They wrote about where their ideas came from and the conditions they needed for writing. Often it was difficult for me to find a time when I could collect their journals to read and respond to what they had been writing. "But, Mrs. B, I need my p.j. because I might have some ideas on my piece tonight."

One day late in the school year I asked my students to write a response to this question: "If you had to expalin what a process journal is to someone who had never heard of it before, what would you tell him?" A sampling of responses follows:

> *A process journal is .....*
>
> *a journal in which we write everything we go through while writing a piece. We put in our feelings, our thoughts, and our problems that we had with the piece. It's a good thing to have a process journal although it took me a long time to get used to it.*
>
> *a book in which you place your thoughts and ideas about how you are as a writer. There is no 'correct' way to use a process journal. You can use it in the best way you can.*
>
> *a journal that you write in about your experiences while writing*
>
> *it's part of you. If you get stuck, pull out your trusty process journal and write about your surroundings, feelings, anything at all and the block will pass.*
>
> *your own log of your composing process. It can tell you a lot of things about the way your write. You can use it to plan a piece or you can use it when you're stuck. You can write in it before, during, or after writing a piece (or all these times). It's your own thing and only you can try to get something out of it.*
>
> *a journal where all your thoughts and feelings are stored on paper about your writing. It acts as a guide to lead you to the way you feel when you write. Each piece you write gives you different thoughts and feelings and a process journal helps you to understand more about them.*

Of course, not every single student experienced "the power of the process journal" (as Diane would say). For some students it continued to be a chore, a bore, a drag. I often wondered if the whole idea of a process journal was cognitively inappropriate for these students? In asking them to think about how they composed was I asking them to do something more abstract than they could do at this point in their lives? I'm still not sure about the answer to this. Several other students simply never tried to make their process journal something that was very useful to themselves. They knew it and they knew that I knew it. My attitude was somewhat philosophical. While I never stopped asking questions and offering suggestions, I also realized that just because I led someone to the process journal did not mean that he would drink, or however that old adage goes. One or two other students found the physical act of writing to be so laborious that any additional writing in the process journal over and above the pieces that they had to complete, was certainly not viewed with joy.

The main thing I learned in last year's portion of my teaching journey with regard to having my students keep process journals in which they write regularly is that it is valuable for many students in the same way that it is valuable for me or any writer. It was worth it to persevere.

—//—

EXPLORING THE COMPOSING PROCESS WITH EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS -- REVISITED
OR
HOW THE EXPERIENEE OF ONE YEAR INFORMS THE NEXT

The essential difference between this year and my three previous years' experiences with having students keep process journals was that this year's students had never been 'exposed' to the process journal before. Although they often talked process with their 7th grade teacher, the word was never used and they never wrote about their composing experiences. I was very pleasantly surprised on the first day of school to find that many of them already knew about process journals, however. They had heard from their friends that process journals were great! So, not only did I get to introduce process journals fresh, but also they had a positive mind-set. Add to that what I know from last year and how could I go wrong? I began on September 13.

> *FROM MY TEACHING JOURNAL, SEPTEMBER 13: I'm thinking about notebooks and names of notebooks. I'm wondering if process journal is a clear name. An alternative title has drifted around in my mind since last year: writing diary. Is that too easily confused with the private journal? How about composing journal or composing log? How is it that I will decide this weighty issue? The title seems important. If the kids understand the title it will help them focus. Maybe I'll just explain the purpose to them and see which title they think makes the most sense.*

2-12

In class that day it was decided that each person could call his/her 'process journal' whichever of the titles he preferred. They added some additional choices. "My Book About Writing","My Journal About How I Write", and several others. I told them that force of habit would probably cause me to say 'process journal' regardless of what title they were using. To help them see the possibilities for all the kinds of things to write about 'how they write', we brainstormed a comprehensive list of things that could be factors in someone's composing process: the conditions that one needs (silence, noise, being alone, etc.); the materials one uses, where one writes, when one writes (relative to other homework), whether or not one permits interruptions, whether or not one seeks assistance or response while writing, whether or not one re-reads, etc. The list was long and included many specifics. Then I gave them an assignments for the next day. Write on the topic, "What I Know Now About How I Write". They were to include as many of the items from our list as they were aware of about themselves as writers. The next day we read and discussed many of these in class before I collected them to read and respond.

> *FROM MY TEACHING JOURNAL, SEPTEMBER 15: I spent several hours this afternoon reading process journals for the first time. I love how I feel when I read journals. I especially love the opportunity it presents for one-to-one communication. I am very aware of the energy it produces in me: both physical and mental. I also love the distinctive styles that emerge within kids' p.j. writing. I am very conscious of not wanting to make a big deal out of process journals. Right now it seems to be accepted. I'm wary of the future. The other day I told kids that they were all researchers into their own composing process. Will they want to know why it matters? Every comment I wrote this afternoon was positive. The only questions I asked were those that actually occurred to me.... natural questions as opposed to 'teaching' questions. I plan to xerox all the "What I KNow Now About How I Write entries. Later in the year, perhaps in January and again in June I think it will be fun to write that again.*
>
> *FROM MY JOURNAL, SEPTEMBER 21: Sunday night I read all of English B's process journals. I could have easily continued to work throught the night because of how turned on I was. I haven't said much yet about what to write or how to write a process entry. All I've done is ask them to write what they're aware of or what they notice, or how they did it. I'm glad because it seems almost that it's natural for them. They're just doing it. What might mess it up is emphasizing or talking too much about how/what to write. I don't want them to start trying to figure out what it's all about. Soon I want to share with them various ways in which they or their classmates have written entries so far, so I xeroxed a lot of entries.*
>
> *FROM MY JOURNAL, OCTOBER 3: I'm finally typing up a few examples of process journals to distribute in class tomorrow. I may stick in one or two from last year just to illustrate variety or I may not. While reading and responding to their journals I think about what value there is for them in being aware of how they write. I think frequent sharing of examples from their own writing is better than "instructive" comments from me.*

In the next day's class I distributed the "Exerpts From Process Journals", and experienced once again that deep, enveloping silence that occurs when students are reading things written by each other. After they read, I asked them to write their reactions, questions, responses, etc. to be shared the following day. This was a discussion that was easy, and comfortable with lots of room for questions about what to do and how to do.

> *FROM MY JOURNAL, OCTOBER 16: Some thoughts on process journals from this week. Kids are beginning to sort themselves into those who see value for themselves and those who don't. Most of those who don't see value have not yet tried it really. They give lip service to suggestions of different things to try. I had some brief individual discussions with people like Brian, John, and Eric. I put it in terms of "are you willing to improve your writing this year?" Brian said he wasn't sure. I told him that anything other than a definite yes was a no and that "I Got it." That's where he's at right now.*

A few weeks after this I experienced a discovery of my own while writing about the impact of last year's case study work with one particular student. While writing about the several things I learned through working closely with this student, I suddenly knew exactly what I wanted to say to my students about the value of documenting their composing process. It was my answer to the nagging questions of "why write it down?" "Why put it in a journal and keep track of it?' 'What's the use for me?' 'What's the use for you the teacher?" I wrote a memo to my students in which I explained my sudden insight.

THE VALUE OF DOCUMENTING YOUR COMPOSING PROCESS

> *....You are the only one who knows what goes on with you when you write. No one else can know as well as you can. Even though we all may share certain composing characteristics, I definitely believe that each of us composes a piece in a way that is unique to us. Your composing process includes so many things(where you like to be when you write, when you write, the type of pen or pencil and paper that you have to have, radio, TV or not, absolute silence or not, large block of time or not, pickiness about wrods, lots of re-reading, writing big on the page, I could go on and on). When you hand in a piece of writing, I have no way of knowing what you have gone through to write it. Maybe it looks short on the page, but for all I know you went through a real struggle to get it there.*
>
> *The more you become aware of about all that goes own within you and without you as you write, before you write, etc. the more knowledge you will have about yourself as a writer. This is knowledge that you can use for the rest of your life!*
>
> *How can you know all that you know about yourself as a writer? How can you become more aware of all the stuff to pay attention to? Sometimes I think bhat we only know what we know when we share it with another person. Writing it is a way of sharing it.*

2-14

So why write it in a journal and share it with me? The only way I can effectively work with you to improve your writing is if I know a lot about you and how your write -- all the stuff that's part of your process. You can count on me to support your growth in writing this year, but first of all I have to know a lot about it and that includes more than just the words on the paper when it's handed in. We'll have a dialogue together about your composing process. The interaction we will have is one of the ways I can most assist you in improving your writing this year regardless of how good it already is. I think it's also important for you t share what you know about your composing process with each other. The more you share, the more you will be aware..

A couple of things seem basic and essential to all of this. One is that you probably have to be willing to improve your writing. This is a question youcan ask yourself: Am I willing to improve my writing this year? Also, honesty seems crucial. I keep saying that there's no one way to write about your composing process. But there is! The way to write is honestly. What good would it do either of us if you wrote down stuff about your composing process that wasn't true?

Sometimes it's hard to be aware of everything that is part of your composing process. All I'm asking is that you give it your best shot. The More I know about how you write, the better I can do my job of assisting you.

In their process journals, the students wrote their response and any questions that came to mind as they read this memo. Several of their responses follow:

FROM JOHN K., NOVEMBER 2: I guess I don't write in my process journal because I'm afraid somebody else is going to read my feelings and laugh at them. I know when we write and you read it, you get how we feel about writing it, but does it do us any good to write in our process journal about our writing process? I think some people don't write because it may be personal , something they don't want to talk about and they'd rather write it in their private journal.

FROM VICKI, NOVEMBER 2: I'm really glad that you said that about our pieces may look short but may have taken a long time to write. A lot of times that happens to me. At the very beginning of the year I was afraid that our writing might be judged on its length.

FROM KIM P. NOVEMBER 2; You brought up the point that you think we only know what we know when we share it with another person. Well, I think that's true. I've had that experience in writing groups. Already this year I've learned a lot of things about my composing process that I didn't know I knew , like the position I sit in and needing to listen to the radio. I think it's pretty good.

> *FROM JEN K., NOVEMBER 2: I find writing in my process journal hard because I like to keep everything inside my head where it's safe. I understand what you were trying to say in your memo and why writing about how we write is essential to make us improve.*

I find it slightly amusing that I so recently discovered why kids or anyone else should keep an account of his/her composing process. It's one of those things I've known, and now I know it more deeply. It makes me wonder what other discoveries I'll make about things I thought I "knew"!

This year's journey is nearly half over. My students and I will continue to explore our composing processes. I'll read and respond to what they write about how they write and we'll share our composing habits and insights together in class. From time to time I'll distribute excerpts from process journals. And they'll continue to ask WHY and HOW . And that's as it should be, isn't it ?

2-16

(a page from my journal)

EXCERPTS FROM PROCESS JOURNALS

January 25, 1982

Remember when you read this that they are from a lot of different people's process journals — all of them are your classmates.

The purpose is only to share a variety of entries. These are not meant to show "the right way" of writing process entries. The only "right way" is the way that works for you and is truly helpful to you.

You have a choice between making it work for you or doing it just as an assignment — more homework.... a drag.... a chore.

One of the problems with presenting typed examples is that they may appear too neat. Process journals are not final drafts!! Concern with neatness and correctness of your p.j. entries draws your energy away from ideas and feelings.

Enjoy Reading. I enjoyed PUTTING THIS TOGETHER. DLB

2-17

ginning of my piece last night and the ideas kept ing so I kept writing. I got a beginning a middle an end in 50 minutes. So I guess writing it in ctions isn't that much of a good idea. I've got o maybe 2 or 3 more drafts of this story.

I just read this process over and I think that put too many extra words in a sentence if I don't ink it out before I write it down.

I was pretty comfortable writing last night. I ke writing big and skipping lines. I wrote neat r about the 1st two lines and then switched to sloppy int and skipping lines. It's easier for me to write is way.

③

t took me a long time to finish this piece 2 hours n Sun and 3 hours tonight. These hours are straight. don't do anything but write no other homework or ything but I get up and brush my hair, write down ames and words to songs talk to _____ answer the ne and talk for a little while with whoever it as. If I tell them I've got a lot of HW and they ay what do you have to do and I say I've got to evise an English piece they say that's nothing but ey don't know about my stories or how I like to ake my time writing the piece and finally getting t completed. I left off ending onthis draft I'll k my w.g. about what I've got so far.

too long? time wise
too much description
in some parts
too little in
others.
Too much cross
out
too sloppy
two much concern
about what other
people will think
too little concentration
too much thinking
about time
too much thinking
about game tomorrow
too much stop then
start — even While I write this
too much thinking
about a certain
person

Argggghhh

④

I like getting up in the middle of writing and being able to do something else. It makes me feel tha there's no pressure on me to get this done.

Sometimes our entries c 2
about the conditions we need
or the general way we write.

⑤ I really hate the pieces I've written. I hate them!!! They're five minute jobs. I come home, eat something and just put words down on a piece of paper. I know I could feel really comfortable if I just sat down and thought and gave my mind a chance! I feel so lost when I write now. I feel as if my brain is empty. And it hasn't filled up yet. I feel so impatient waiting and waiting for the right ideas.

⑥

_____ just said that if everything is quiet his mind wanders. That's exactly how I feel. If things are happening around me (radio or something else) I make myself concentrate.

This works sometimes but not others. Last night it did but I remember one Sunday when if a bird chirped or my dog walked across the room I couldn't concentrate.

⑦

I was writing this without the radio or any type of noise sitting at a table I don't usually do that but it goes o.K. When ever I write a 1st draft all the points I want to make are down but just in scrambled sentences and the paragraphs are all out of order. I was thinking that I was going to make this part sort of a 1st chapter then I'll have a few chapters about certain things that happen over the summer and hers and Jed's feelings and how he acts towards her. I think I'll have her move away at the end.
There weren't any interruptions or distractions while I was writing so I got ideas out fast.

2-18

Here I go AGAIN. New topic what should I write it on where should I have the setting? Interior monologue, let's see, I've written one of those long long ago, what was it on? God, I don't know. does it have to be true? I can't remember. I must of been ½ asleep. Why CAN'T I REMEMBER! OK, stay in control! Pick a setting, lets see, just to be safe, keep it true!

School	home
tests	brother
	phone call

I DON'T KNOW!

BEFORE WRITING

Calm down!
Work on
school 1st!

Test, pick a part about a test.

Oh, no , I don't know this question, everybody has there paper covered, It's no good to cheat anyhow. I learned my lesson.

No!! thats getting away from the moment.
scratch school!

what's next?

Home
brother

(This is one entry)

Nope, Can't think about anything. Boring topic. Ok what's next? Ugh! How could I pick phone call pick a moment from a phone call conversation! forget it! ugh! Ok go back to school put PLEASE pick a good topic !!!!!!

It's hopeless.

I'm going to my brother for help!! I need it. I have to think of something in life that happens to every-body and at any time. Something small that we forget about.

1) phone call

-ing (end of a ring) Oh No! the phone call, what should I say? Should I pick it up? Let's see. Oh, I've pre-pared a speech could it be him? I bet is is! let's see did I put in in the right or left pocket? Oh no, it's not in the back pokets. Reach your hand in the right front, stupid................

2) trip

Is it cold out ice all over! Wow! I tripped and right in front of his house. ...... No I don't like trip. I think I'll use the phone call.

2-19

①

.How to do part 2
1) grounded -- for week after school
2) tell where they are next wk. end. Wander off
3) Tony seemed conf. Jo nervous
4) dialogue
5) Jo runs home.
6) When she gets in parents notice something wrong and try to talk to her ask what's wrong. No go with Jo no talk.
7) After thinkng about Tony for a while that night she thinks that he'll probably leave her alone now that he's been turned down twice now she put it out of her mind and went to bed.

After I got past the 7-11 scene I did a list of what I want to put into the 2nd part. I did this mostly because I was having most of my problems with the order things were in. Then I got past part 2 and did the same thing for part 3. I just stopped after I wrote "for part 3" and wrote down all the aerosmith songs I could think of. They're on the radio now.

BEFORE WRITING
... getting started
.... planning

I don't know what to write I'm just about finished with all my homework all I have to do is do this and my diary for Social Studies is that how you spell it? Oh, I know, I forgot the i.

I feel like doing the alphabet fancy let me do it on here maybe I'll get an idea. A B C D E F G H I J K L M forget this you're going to get bored you know your alphabet! Hopefully! (I'm tired I have to make myself happy some way) I think I'm going to write a diary of the narrator in The Black Cat no I'm not!!! I DON'T WANT TO!! I don't care for the story!!! I like the Cask of Amontillado better I'm doing the confession That's my favorite story I read by Edgar Allen Poe!!!

③

I'm wondering whether I have to write a piece or use one of the two pieces I handed in in early this year. In early December. I'll probably write a new piece. I don't know what it will be about. I have some ideas but they're not too solid. I'm wondering if I could write about a movie I recently saw. I'm also thinking of maybe doing a story that I got from a movie. Actually the idea from the movie. If I did the story would venture deep into psychodilia!! I'd want the story to be adventurous, I'd want it to be a sort of medieval story, but maybe not. I'd want it to be weird. But I'd want it to be understandable. I don't know how I would do it. It would be hard but I think I could do it. Another idea would be to write a basketball story. Or some kind of story dealing with sports. That would be easy but it would be fun. I would also like to write a fantasy story. That would be fun. But it would be kind of hard. I really don't know what kind of story I'm going to write, but it will be good.

④

I was just looking out the window in English and thought about how nice the trees look now in the fall. I then pictured Jo walking home from the basketball game and this is the time of year I pictured. So I'm gonna put more description about how she feels good and how she likes this time of year.

⑤

This writing assignment is like no other one I had that I can remember. So I'll try it, it sounds like fun. This pen is too hard to write with so I'm going to switch. OK, from a 'parker' to a 'bic'! I think I want to write about the tough life a teenager has, but how it's good in a way. I don't want it to be too short. Here goes!

2-20

This is a first draft I tell myself. Just write. If you don't like the order of things or whatever that's what a writing group is for.

.....at least I'm not feeling pissed off anymore. two starts--vary different--experiencing lots of inner doubts.....Why do I want to write like this? Is it something I really want to write? I have 12 different pages each with a different beginning. I can't seem to switch from a beginning to some of the incidents I want to tell.

---

struggling to begin.

---

another start

After struggling for a while with this beginning I can't see where to take it. I must begin again.

①

I've got so many questions about how I should write this, where should I start what kind of kid is this kid? I feel like he should be what everyone's going to want.

This is definitely not flowing, its choppy city. I can't write like a 6 year old. How is anyone going to know the diffesence between when he's talking to the reader or a character.

This doesn't feel right. I'm making it up as I go along and I never do that. It's definitely forced because it's due tomorrow. The paragraphing is all screwed up. My group is going to have a field day on this one.

②

③

The first time I got stuck I jumbled around in my mind for different words to use like enormous and other word: well, I'll get back now.

The second time I stopped was when I had to remember the way _____'s room was I think there was presents but I'm not sure so I'll just write that down.

Now it's pretty late and my hand's killing me so I guess I'll stop plus the rest is boring.

④

I have to write this one idea down before I forget it. I want to make the point in my story that Jed acts really tough and tries to get Jo into the stuff when he's around his friends and how he acts really nice to her when their alone.

⑤

Got to spend more time on this, got to start out this semester good need to do better on grades got to concentrate, damn someone's got the TV on I still got an hour till Monday night football. Got both doors shut now I can concentrate spending more time on process than on piece. Think.... got it present tense I guess he wakes up, what will he think first/ got it, he'll think John is already is up, need hillbilly voice, needs right words.

Damnit Interruption just when things are flowing

_____ wants to know about TV show

little humor, great, things are comin back, flowin, thinks he's a king, show love, he'll do it for him. So he doesn't get whipped? no doesn't happen. Needs to ask where John is but no dialogue, do it anyway need it.

Is I love you too dramatic, no it's a gr ending.

WHILE WRITING....... "talking" + thinking to ourselves

2-21

I started out with the idea on the last 2 pages and started to write it and I decided I didn't like it and did one of those thought trains or whatever you call it and somehow I ended up at the video game Pacman. I don't know how though. (Thought trains are like "when I think of caves I think of dark, when I think of dark I think of .... etc. etc.)

④

I decided to write a sports story. I decided to because it would be easier to write a sports story. I was right all along. The story never stopped rolling. From the beginning I had ideas popping out of my head. Once the idea was all down on paper a new idea came. I discovered that what you said was true. Stick to what you know about and writing won't be so difficult and that your stories will be better.

⑤

2-32

⑥

I was sitting by a window in my bedroom and was
watching the leaves fall off of the trees. I thought
about how it seems like only yesterday I was watching the
trees get their leaves. I then started to think about
the time I was in first grade. I have no idea how I
thought of this, I just did. I had a perfect picture
in my head of my teacher Miss Tuthill working at the
chalkboard and me at my desk. Then I began to think
that I should write a story about when I was in first
grade. One thing we did every morning was copy sentences.
We did this every morning. Miss Tuthill never even let
us skip a day of writing sentences. That is what I
decided to write about. I had no trouble at all because
I saw a picture of the scene I was writing in my head
and I just wrote what I saw. With the picture I also
remembered how I felt in first grade in different
situations. I remembered that one day I was crying
in school and I could remember what I was saying to
myself at that time. (I didn't write about this though.)
Even as I write this process now, details about school
when I was in first grade are coming into my head.
It is kind of sad to think of things and know that
I will never in first grade again, I'll just keep

①

ter writing--

reason why I didn't finish the other process is I
figured out what I wanted to do with it so I
ted to get writing it and I also couldn't
cribe what I wanted to do with it without
ually writing it.

sed my usual way of writing a first draft.
's really sloppy and it took me along time
write because I kept stopping and getting up
lking to _____, etc.

picked to write the wife's POV and how it happened
t I couldn't write it how it happened--I wrote it
ke she was dead and telling the story.

I had to go back a few times and change the
y I wrote a few things because they were in the
ong tense or something.

I wasn't too comfortable writing tonight. I
dn't write that much and it took me too long
cause I was restless.

When I wrote this my biggest problem was---
don't know how to put this--- it was getting
in the right tense-- tense is the word I guess
u use I didn't know how to make it seem that it
as happening at that very time and also include
r POV and stuff. So I just make it her telling
story. How couldshe do that? I don't know.

Great! I loved it. Everything (ideas) came out with such smoothness and quick too. It seemed so natural. Really wierd. I never felt this way before. As if I had written the story in my head. And I just had to write it down. I didn't even care about the length. Because I felt for sure it had everything I wanted and it needed to have.

②

I'm back. I just finished the piece and towards the end it had a lot of emotional feeling to it. When I was writing, I started to really think about it seriously. You only live once. I think about life a lot and sometimes I think I'm rushing it. I never stop thinking about it. But i kind of like being young.

③

① I'm really stuck on this piece I tried revising it but I couldn't get going. There are so many suggestions from my w.g. that I want to use and I also hate the ending-it's stupid. If I'm gonna' have Tony kill himself I would make it Tony's story and make Jo like a character like Jeannie in the story not really a major part. If I kept it as Jo's story I like the ending up.......I might make it she finally tells her parents what's been happening and something happens to Tony. I don't know I guess I could revise everything up to the ending but it will take me a while.I just couldn't write today, I tried before dinner and after but I just didn't know how to put and leave out things that the w.g. suggested. I think I'm thinking too much about the w.g. suggestions. Some I wgat to use but I just couldn't get comfortable writing tonight.

② I don't care what anybody says I'm still aggravated. It seems like I have to start all over again. I'm having problems on whether or not the two girls should be friendly or not as friendly to each other. I'm having trouble with all of my he said, she said, etc. Now that I think about it I don't like the ending either now, that I think about it. I've just talked to ________ which helped. What if they had played there when they were little. What if she never takes the gag out so then she doesn't talk, only think. That would work so much better. I wrote in my idea log different choices instead of said so if I get stuck I can just look at the list and pick one. This is tough. I think the pieces are falling into place. I'm finding it hard to concentrate. I think I have to get out of the habit of trying to use everyone's ideas. I think I'm too easily convinced.

③ There's no no way I can do a revision on this piece in one night. There are so many points that ____, ____, and ____ made that I would like to use. I think that maybe if I find a place to put in a little more of Tony's feelings I will, not too much. I like the beginning too. I'll need to clarify Jo's feelings more. She feels that she has to be accepted in the town so she turns into somewhat of a head but then when Tony really puts her to the test she realizes that she can't put all the works she's put into being a good girl and respecting her parents views on things down the drain. She begins to feel a little sorry for Tony but just can't give in. I think that the story is Jo's story and the ending is more Tony's story so I'm going to change the whole ending. But the whole story leads up to that one night in the park so what could happen except for him to hurt her? I'm just mad that I've got to make all these corrections.

I can't believe how much trouble I'm having doing this draft. I tried a couple of days a go to get started on the revision but I couldn't get it going. SO I said to myself I'll do it on Sunday. So after ____ and ____ went home I tried I was pretty upset about something that happened on Sat. so I only got a couple of paragraphs out. I can't write when I'm upset. Then I tried again at about 9 and nothing came But I had to get it down so I pushed myself to write until now (11:00) and at least get past the 7-11 scene. I did do that but I hope the writing group doesn't give me too many more points to work on I'm getting fed up with revising. I don't mind it being long but it takes too long to revise.

⑤ I tried to write an ending. I can't get one. I've started 4 different times each time it starts out a different way. All end no where. It's really pissing me off. I want it to end with Brian talking Tony out of it. But out of what? I can't think of what I want Brian and Jeannie to say. Maybe I'll just change the whole thing. Not even have Jeannie and Brian come at all. But then how will Jo get out of it. I don't want her dead and I don't want him killing himself. I'm stuck.

⑥ Revising makes me feel like just leaving out parts to make it easier. I've always got to tell myself to leave it in/ Guess I'd better not make it happened one sentence or what's before it won't be a sentence.

REVISING

2-23

MARGARET: A CASE STUDY IN COMPOSING

DIANE BURKHARDT
SHOREHAM-WADING RIVER MIDDLE SCHOOL
SHOREHAM, NY

NOVEMBER, 1983

2-24

Studying one student's writing in depth had a profound impact on my teaching. I did not throw out everything I used to do or change my whole approach or anything as drastic as that. Rather what I learned confirmed my basic notions about teaching, deepened my knowledge and understanding, and hastened my growth in certain areas.

In 1981-82 I had the opportunity to do an intensive study of the writing of one of my eighth grade students. At the time I was one of ten teachers working collaboratively with Sondra Perl in an NIE-funded study to document how teachers teach writing at different grade levels. The ten of us had in common the training we had received in National Writing Project summer institutes held in our school district. Sondra and two research assistants observed our writing classes nearly every day for the entire school year. Each of us was to select at least one student for our own in depth study of the composing process. I selected Margaret Coughlin .

Margaret was a good writer, but not the best in the class. She was obviously intelligent and a good student, but not a "grind". She was gregarious, with a good sense of humor. Intuitively I knew that she was a person with whom I would enjoy spending additional time, and that she would be comfortable working with me individually. She would not be intimidated, nor shy in expressing herself. Also, she was interested in Sondra's research and had even borrowed a copy of the proposal to read. When I explained about case studies in class and asked for volunteers, Margaret wrote that "it would be fun to be studied".

I also selected five other students as case studies -- three boys and two additional girls. I thought it would be necessary to learn about more than one student's writing. Although I wanted to investigate every aspect of their writing, I was particularly interested in their choice of topic or themes given the fact that in my class they had nearly complete freedom to write whatever they wanted. I was curious about the amount of advance planning they did for their writing, and I also wanted to learn about their approaches to revision-- how and why they proceeded to make changes in successive drafts of a piece.

In order to find out these things I would meet regularly with each for interviews about his/her writing, I would carefully read the journals in which they wrote about their composing process for all of their writing,and each would occasionally compose aloud into a tape recorder when they were writing a first draft or revising a piece.

My plan proved overly ambitious. It was easy to keep up with their journals inasmuch as I was regularly responding to the journals of all my students. It was more difficult to find convenient times for regular writing interviews, although I managed to do it at least four times with each. It was very difficult to arrange time for composing aloud sessions, although each of them did this at least once.

For a variety of reasons, Margaret became my primary case study, and it is from her that I learned the most. By far the most revealing and informative aspect of our research was the six different occasions when she composed her drafts or revisions aloud. Subsequently, I listened to these tapes and recorded her composing behaviors on a composing style sheet which Sondra had developed for her doctoral research. [SEE APPENDIX 1] Margaret and I taped more than 25 hours of interviews in which we discussed the drafts and/or revisions she was working on for class, her insights into her writing, and the barriers she encountered from time to time. I kept a case study journal in which I wrote nearly every day about my observations of her in the classroom and the brief conversations we had daily about her writing. Also, her composing process journal provided her with a means for written reflection about all aspects of her writing process. My responses and questions in her journal led us to a continuing dialogue about her writing. Through all that we shared, our personal relationship became quite close, a serendipitous aspect of case study research. And from learning about her, I learned a great deal from her. She truly had a profound impact on my teaching.

I saw how complex her composing process is, how many composing behaviors are a part of her process, and I learned to look for these in others. I learned that the writing process goes far beyond the written word on pages of paper turned in to satisfy an assignment. I learned not to look at a draft of a piece without also looking for what's behind it. I realized that if I could only know as much about how all students composed as I knew about how Margaret did, I could be so much more effective in supporting their growth as writers. Thus, I doubled my efforts at helping each student to pay attention to his/her composing process and to communicate about it both with me and with others.

I learned that there are times when a person just can't write. This may be one of the most important things Margaret taught me. Had I not known so much about the factors that 'disabled' her writing, I'm sure I would have lectured her about "settling down and making herself write". I've learned to be patient with others during their 'dry spells', to be reassuring so they know that I understand, and to have confidence that they will write when they are able.

I used to think that a certain amount of time had to pass for enough experiences to accumulate in any given school year in order to form a basis for trust. Margaret helped me to see that trust is the basis for everything else in the classroom. If I trust that everyone wants to write, then when someone says, "I can't" it doesn't mean he's lazy or obstinate. I learned to have him talk more about what he means when he says, "I can't", or at least to assure him that I know there is a reason whether or not he can express it.

I learned that I don't want to have due dates that presume that all students can march locked-step together with first, second, and third drafts all due on the same days. What about those who, like Margaret, will become involved in a long piece and want to revise the beginning before going on to the end? Or those who will want to do four or five drafts of a piece before it satisfies them.

Margaret has become my silent partner. What I've learned from her informs what I do in class. She helps me plan, evaluate, and revise. She tempers my words at times, and reminds me to extend to everyone the same trust, patience, and confidence that I gave to her. Does this mean that I think every student composes exactly as Margaret does? No, not at all. All it means is that focusing closely on one student is a significant reminder that each student is an individual. I always want to remember that.

When I began to write about what I had learned by studying Margaret's writing, I was plagued by questions of audience. "Who wants to know this?" I asked myself. What importance does a detailed study of one eighth grade student's composing process have? I was not a 'noted researcher' in the field of writing, and my 'research methods' were not those of a scholar. It seemed presumptuous of me to be writing what I had learned. It had great importance to me, but who else might find it useful? My husband, also an eighth grade teacher, suggested that he and others like him who were always looking for insights that would help them improve their teaching of writing, were the audience. I tried writing to him, but was no more successful with this audience in mind.

Only one audience felt right -- Margaret. She was the one who had invested so much of herself in 'being studied'. It was for her I wanted to complete my analysis of the data we had collected together, and it was for her I wanted to write about what I had learned.

This is for you, Margaret. A report from me to you about all that you have taught me about how you write -- what you do, what you think, how you proceed to put the words on the paper that carry the meaning you want them to have.

Your involvement in what you write is very deep. Whether a story, a poem, even a letter to a friend, writing is a promise you make to yourself, one that must be fulfilled. Writing is not easy, not something to be dashed off quickly just to meet a due date. When you have an idea and begin to 'build' a piece which develops it, you will pursue it relentlessly until you get it how you want it to be. You know what an investment of yourself writing involves, and sometimes this knowledge keeps you from starting a piece that you know will be long or "heavy". "I just want to write light stuff right now, not a story. Stories are always heavy for me."

There are times when you can't write at all. "I'm such a baby," you once wrote. "Everything's got to be perfect or else I can't write." Perfect refers primarily to internal conditions rather than to external ones. The TV may be on in the next room, or the radio playing in the same room, or others may be talking nearby, and none of these will distract you. But you can't write when you're upset or have something on your mind (unless that's what you will write about). You refer to these times as "my dry spells". A dry spell may last as much as two or three weeks. It may result from an unresolved personal problem, or from the pressures of a busy schedule and too many demands on your time. You can't write when you don't have a long block of uninterrupted time.

Your ideas for pieces you write come from within you. You find them by writing freely (in the fashion of Peter Elbow), or by listing all the thoughts in your mind, then allowing yourself to explore fully the one which interests you most (in the fashion of Sondra Perl's guidelines for composing).

When you begin the piece you have only a general idea of what it will be about and some of the specifics it will include.

> "I want to write about Diane. A lot of people don't really know what she's like. She gave me a poem today. What she wrote means a lot to me and I want to respond."
> [Composing Aloud Tape, 2/24/82]

> "I want to write something, a story I think, about my grandfather and what it might be like when he dies."
> [Composing Aloud Tape, 4/4/82]

You don't have an outline or a plan and you don't know very much about where it will go. You will enter the

2-28

piece and build it from within following the direction that your words take you.

You pick up your pencil, open your spiral notebook, and begin. "I always write the heading on the top..., so it doesn't look like there's nothing on the paper." Then, before another word is written, you rehearse many ideas for the opening sentence. You are looking for your entry into the piece.

> "I'm trying to think how to start. I'm trying to think whether to start it...I'm gonna' have me coming home from school seeing my mother upset. I was just trying to think whether I'm going to start it, like at what point in the day am I going to start it? School? Practice? Softball practice probably since that's the season. Talking to someone, saying goodbye like 'I'll call ya' later, Col' or something like that. [10 second pause] I know I don't wantto start it with 'it's a regular day' y'know? or 'it's a regular day as I walk up my driveway.' All right. I've got it."
>
> [Composing Aloud Tape, 4/4/82]

Sometimes you need to rehearse for a long time before you find your beginning. In February, when you wrote the piece about Diane, you spent nearly twenty-five minutes before you found the first words to write. You talked about her and about your friendship, you questioned what form to use, then you clarified your purpose in writing either for or about her.

Rehearsing may include thoughts about later developments in the piece. In working on the 'kidnaping piece' you comment that knowing where to start depends upon whether it's the father or the mother who will get custody of the children. You commonly ask yourself questions.

> "Should I begin with the judge announcing his decision? Should it be the little girl? I think it will be dialogue. Should it be the mother talking to one of her friends, telling her the results ofthe court case?"
>
> [Composing Aloud Tape, 1/16/82]

Or there are questions of form.

> Should I write a free verse poem? Or should it be a letter? I don't know. Maybe this could be a poem? I've got to find a place to start...I still don't know if it's a poem or a letter. There's the possibility of a rhyming poem. I don't know. Would it have a

> good rhythm. I'm trying to think of the form, a format for what I want to say...I'm just going to write a letter--no verse, no rhyme, no measure or whatever the word is, okay?"
> [Composing Aloud Tape, 2/24/82]

At times rehearsing intermingles with planning. You try out an idea, automatically switch to specific planning, reject it, and switch back to another thought. You are always looking for the entry point and somewhere to go from there. "Starting is always the hardest."

Finally, you find the way to begin, and the first words are written. Immediately, you re-read. "I say it, write it, say it again." Another sentence is written and re-read. Then another. A paragraph is completed and re-read in its entirety. You listen as you re-read to see if what you have written is "right". First you ask yourself if it is plausible. "Is that what the little girl would say?" or "Is that how my mother would act?" "Would Mrs. Tessio be the person who would call?" Your voice takes on many different qualities: a little girl's curiosity on the first day of school and her big brother's impatience with her many questions. A mother's sadness at the death of her father and her daughter's bewilderment at the suddenness of this loss. You become each character in order to hear that what he or she is saying is accurate.

Often as you re-read, you are seeing a real life scene and searching for the words that will convey this to the reader. You see Diane coming into a room brightening it with her smile and wonder how to describe this. You picture yourself getting off the bus with "loads of books, tons of gym clothes, and a bruised knee", and ask yourself how you will get up the driveway. "Limp? Hobble? Struggle?" You see a set of photographs of your grandfather and want to describe each in detail.

You also re-read to check that the mechanics are "right". Is it punctuated so that the eventual reader, not having the benefit of your reading aloud, will know how to read it with the tone, emphasis, and pauses that you intend?

You do not go on until you feel internal satisfaction with what you already have written. Finally, when your sense of "rightness" is fulfilled, you re-read with one other purpose in mind. "When I read things over and over again," you explain, "I'm trying to think of what comes next." In other words, you are going back in order to go ahead.

Your composing soon takes on its own rhythm -- intervals of rehearsal, writing, and re-reading or repeating with changes in wording or tone. A short section of the 'grandfather piece' illustrates this pattern. You re-read sentences #14-#17, then begin to plan what comes next. In the midst of planning, you interrupt yourself to ask three questions, each of which indicates a slightly different direction. Again you re-read sentence #17 and change one word in it. You talk about what comes next and these words of rehearsal lead immediately to writing the beginning of sentence #18. You repeat the words twice, evaluate them negatively, talk about a change, revise several words, plan for the rest of the sentence, repeat the part that's already written, write the next part, re-read it three times, and evaluate it positively before re-reading all of sentence #18.

Because you have no detailed plan for this (or any piece), you are free to go where you are led (or sent) by the piece itself. You are located within the piece, sometimes so deeply within it that when the tape recorder you are using for composing aloud clicks off, you jump. At times you are immersed so deeply in the feelings of which you are writing that you experience them. When you write about what Diane's friendship means to you, you cry. When you rehearse the words to use in expressing your reaction to the news of your grandfather's unexpected death, you are suddenly overcome with emotion.

> "I saw him only four days ago. I had a letter to send, and school pictures. He loved them. Who's going to be my grandfather? I have no one. Nobody."
> And you emerge from this to say, "Oh, I'm getting upset."
> [Composing Aloud Tape, 4/6/82]

When you are so deeply within the piece, your voice (in composing aloud) has a somewhat distant quality --the distance of deep concentration rather than of withdrawal. You are aware of sinking deeply into your writing. "That's why I hate to stop or be interrupted. It takes so much to get back into it."

Unless, of course, you interrupt yourself. A word or phrase triggers an idea. "I've got an idea!" you exclaim gleefully, and a torrent of words pours forth as you explain. Once it was for the set of five pictures of your grandfather at various stages of his life. Verbally you sketch out what will happen.

> "My mother will tell me to sit down in the big easy chair and before she says anything, Meg (that's me) will see the set of photographs and she'll focus on each one, each at a different time of his life, and she'll describe what she sees."
> [Composing Aloud Tape, 4/4/82]

It seems not to matter that the direction or the specifics of any idea or plan may change before you even have a chance to write it down, or the next time you re-read it, or in a later draft of the piece. You often remind yourself that this is how you will have it for now, "and I'll see later if that's how I really want it." From the very first words of the very first draft you now that you will write more than one draft. You're very comfortable with that notion.

When you emerge from within the piece because of any interruption, re-reading always provides your re-entry into it -- unless you can't see or hear what comes next. When you don't know where to go, you stop.

You return to the piece, whether it be a day or a week later, with a fresh eye and ear. You re-read all that you have previously written. It is time to revise.

The scope of your revisions is impressive. Two days after beginning the 'grandfather piece' you sit down to continue it, but first you must re-read and revise what you have already written. You proceed sentence by sentence, sometimes making very small changes, sometimes deleting a whole sentence, but never leaving anything untouched. You have already labored painstakingly over the first paragraph of this piece in the first draft, yet before these four sentences are finally the way you want them to be in the fifth draft, you will spend nearly twenty minutes revising them. [SEE APPENDIX 2]

After forty-five minutes of your first revising session on this piece, you explain:

> "I think I feel better when I have something the way I want it before I continue with it. Maybe I shoulon't have done this. Maybe I should have continued with the story, but this is what I felt like doing. I felt like going back an revising little parts because....well, I just had to do it before I could go on."
> [Composing Aloud Tape, 4/6/82]

In the third draft of this piece you delete unmercifully. Entire sentences are wiped out in as short a time as it takes you to make a pencil mark through them. Why is it so easy to do this? "Because," you say, "that's not how I want it anymore." These are moments of great certainty in revising.

And there are moments of frustration-- the search for the right word, how to include a tricky participial phrase so that it doesn't dangle, how to have your mother report the news of your grandfather's death, and perhaps the greatest frustration of all -- how to continue that piece when you can't see what comes next. At the end of the third draft, you say:

> "How many times am I going to get to this point and stop? [20 second pause] You know I want to go back and revise the freakin' beginning again. [8 second pause] I want to. And I know it would

> probably be best to go on, but [and here you hit your pen on the table to emphasize each word] I can't go on until I get the beginning!"
>
> [Composing Aloud Tape, 4/26/82]

After almost six weeks of working on this piece, you decide to abandon it.

> "I don't even like this piece. There's something about it that irks me. How long was it going to take before I realized I didn't really like it. There are certain phrases and sentences that I like, and I like the beginning. But I can't get a sincere reaction down without it sounding corny. None of the continuations I have tried to write are really what I would do in this situation. Maybe it's not the right mode. Maybe it's not what I really want to be writing. All I know is that I'm going to can this piece.
>
> [Process Journal Entry, 5/13/82]

Your first audience is yourself, and no amount of positive feedback from others could make up for the fact that you could not satisfy yourself. Your writing group gave nothing but positive responses. Sondra and I told you it was the most skillfully crafted short story you had ever written. Both of us tried to praise and cajole you into continuing it, but you never wavered.

Your writing represents you on a sheet of paper. You are reluctant to share an early draft with any audience other than your writing group whose job it is to listen and respond to the draft without judgment or evaluation. You are embarrassed for "outsiders" to hear the piece until it is the way you want it to be. Once as part of a presentation to other teachers, we played a portion of your writing group's taped discussion. To help them follow the discussion, we gave them copies of the first draft that was being discussed. Afterwards, you insisted that they read the final published copy of the piece. "I want you to see how much better it became." Yet, you are not at all reluctant to share finished pieces. "When a piece is finished it will be the way I like it, so it will be for anybody to read." But first you must satisfy yourself, and that's not easy.

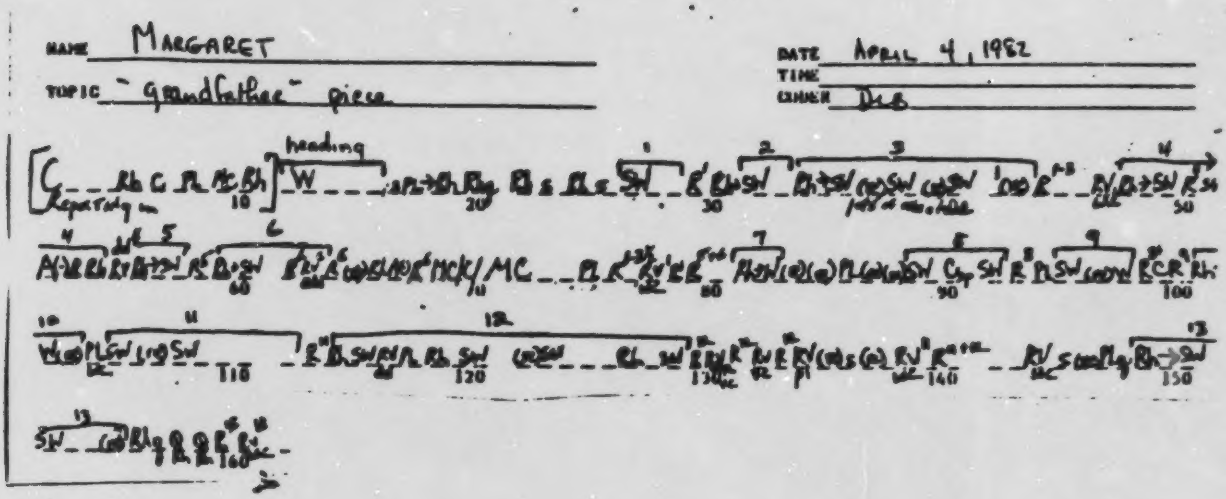
I marvel at your willingness to experience all the "ups and downs" of your composing process. I wonder if the struggle is worth it for you, but your own words assure me that it is:

> "I would just like to say that I do get many joys out of writing. The satisfaction of knowing I worked hard on

> my piece, that I'm proud of it and other people like it also--that's joy. The points when I'm stuck and then I get an idea--the feeling of relief is joy. The way ideas just come to me sometimes gives me joy. I'll put it this way-- when the knot in my stomach unties, that's joy!
> [Process Journal Entry, 1/20/82]

APPENDIX 1

An Excerpt from A Composing Style Sheet



NAME MARGARET

TOPIC "grandfather" piece

DATE April 4, 1982

TIME

CODER DLB

These coding categories which represent different composing behaviors were borrowed from Dr. Sondra Perl in CODING THE COMPOSING PROCESS: A GUIDE FOR TEACHERS AND RESEARCHERS

C	Comment
Rh	Rehearsing
Pl	Planning
MC	Metacomment
A	Assessment
-	negative
+	positive
W	Writing
s	Silence
SW	Speaking the words being written
R	Reading
re	repeating
RV	Revising
Q	question

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

APPENDIX 2

EXCERPTS FROM MARGARET'S SHORT STORY

The following excerpts show Margaret's revisions of the beginning of the 'grandfather piece'.

DRAFT #1

It's 4:30 and I'm starving as usual after my softball practice. What a crappy day this has been, 1st I get a C on my Spanish, then I get a hassle from my math teacher over the homework I didn't do, and now I smash my knee sliding into 2nd. I just hope my mom is in a good mood when I get home because I can hardl y walk.

I'm the only one left on this stupid bus with loads of books and gym clothes. How am I gonna' make it up the driveway with this knee? Limp and experience pain, I guess.

"Bye, Annie," I said to the bus driver as I hobbled down the stairs of the bus.

"Bye, bye now. Hope your knee gets better. You rest that ya' hear."

"Yeah, I hear ya', Annie. See ya' Monday."

I struggled across the road and up the driveway, dropping either my shorts or my Spanish quiz that needs signing every two feet. As I continue my agonizing journey up the back path, I just prayed that the back door is open so I don't have to walk back and lift the garage doors.

The door is locked and I want to scream, but I realize there must be someone home that can open the door. As I pound on the door I hear footsteps slowly get louder as they approach the door. I see my mom through the curtains. Her eyes appear red and puffy. She fights to raise a tired arm to unlock the door and let me in.

"Mom, is something wrong?" I ask as I throw my books down scaring my dog.

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DRAFT #2

I'm on the 4:30 bus and I'm starving as usual after my softball practice. School was horrible today. I got a C on my Spanish test, then the math teacher bawls me out because I didn't do my homework, and now I've smashed my knee sliding into 2nd during what had to be the hardest softball practice I've ever had.

I'm the only one left on this damn bus with loads of books and tons of gym clothes. How am I gonna' make it up the driveway with this knee? Limp, I suppose. "Bye, Annie," I say to the driver as I hobble down the stairs of the bus.

"Bye, bye, Meg. Hope you're feelin' better, you rest that knee now ya' hear?"

"Yeah, I hear ya', Annie. See ya' Monday."

I limped across the road and up the driveway, dropping either my gym shorts or my Spanish test every two steps. (The Spanish test needs signing.) As I continue my agonizing journey up the back path, I just pray that the back door is open so I don't have to walk back and lift the garage doors.

The door is locked and I want to scream, but I realize from seeing my mom's car in the driveway that she must be home to let me in. As I pound on the window pane I hear footsteps slowly get louder as they approach the door. I see my mom through the curtains. Her eyes appear red and puffy as if she's been crying. She fights to raise a tired arm to unlock the door and let me in.

"Mom, is something wrong?" I ask as I throw my books down just barely missing my dog's head.

DRAFT #3

I have omitted Draft #3 of the beginning from the appendix because it is not significantly different than the previous draft. In Draft #3 of this piece Margaret worked primarily on later sections of the short story which are not excerpted here. Except for editing corrections and a few changes in wording, she left the beginning alone.

DRAFT #4

I was on the 4:30 bus and starving as usual after my softball practice. School was horrible that day. My math teacher bawled me out for not doing my homework, and of all the Spanish tests this year, the one I got back that day needed signing. I got a C. I had to run extra laps in practice , one for every minutes I was late, and then I twisted my knee sliding into 2nd.

I was the only one left on the bus with loads of books, one Social Studies project, and tons of gym clothes. I had cleaned out my gym locker for the first time all year that day.

"How am I gonna' make it up the driveway with these knees?" "Limp, I suppose," I said answering myself.

"Bye, Annie," I said to the driver as I hobbled down the stairs of the bus.

"Bye, bye, Meg. Hope you're feelin' better, you rest that knee now ya' hear?"

"Yeah, I hear ya', Annie. See ya' Monday."

I limped across the road and up the driveway, dropping either my gym shorts or Spanish test every two steps. As I continue my agonizing journey up the back path, I thank God that my Mom's car is in the driveway. That means she's home, so I won't have to lift the garage doors in case the back door is locked

The back door was locked and I waited impatiently for my mom to come and let me in. I saw my mom through the curtains. Her eyes were red and puffy as if she'd been crying.

"Mom, is something wrong?" I ask as I threw my books down just barely missing my dog's head.

DRAFT #5

I'm on the 4:30 bus and starving as usual after my softball practice. School was horrible today. My math teacher bawled me out for not doing my homework, and of all the Spanish tests this year, the one I got back today needs signing. I got a C. I had to run extra laps in practice , one for every minutes I was late, and then I twisted my knee sliding into second.

I'm the only one left on this damn bus with loads of books, one Social Studies project, and tons of gym clothes. Today was the first time I cleaned out my gym locker all year.

How am I gonna' make it up the driveway witn these knees? Limp, I suppose.

"Bye, Annie," I said to the driver as I hobbled down the stairs of the bus.

"Bye, bye, Meg. Hope you're feelin' better, you rest that knee now ya' hear?"

"Yeah, I hear ya', Annie. See ya' Monday."

I limped across the road dropping either my gym shorts or Spanish test every two steps. As I continue my agonizing journey, I thank God that my mom's car is in the driveway. That means she's home, so I won't have to lift the garage doors in case the back door is locked.

The back door is locked and I wait impatiently for my mom to come and let me in.

I see my mom through the curtains. Her eyes are red and puffy as if she's been crying.

"Mom, is something wrong?" I ask as I throw my books down just barely missing my dog's head.

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Becky: A Case Study in Composition

Ross M. Burkhardt

Arrogance. What can I learn from a thirteen-year-old girl? This question sat in my mind when I began my case study in composition with Becky, an eighth grade student in my English class. After all, I had been teaching for almost twenty years, the last three of them using the National Writing Project process model. I knew it all. And yet, "there is none so blind as he who will not see." That was me—blinded by my beliefs. I approached the case study both with the arrogance of knowing it all and the inexperience of not knowing what to look for. At that time I was one of ten teachers involved in a National Institute of Education writing research project with Dr. Sondra Perl. Each of us had agreed to allow Sondra and her two research assistants to observe our English classes every week for an entire school year, to meet weekly with Sondra and the research assistants in a study group, to keep a daily journal of observations about our teaching of composition, and to investigate one student's writing in depth using a case study approach. All this occurred in 1981-82. Time has afforded me new perspectives, and I now see the value in looking carefully at how Becky approached composition tasks.

During the year Becky and I collaborated, we met in my classroom after school on six occasions. At two early meetings, we had general discussions of her writing history. On four other occasions (November, December, January, and April), I asked her to compose aloud, that is, to write and simultaneously say aloud as much as she possibly could of what she was thinking while she composed a piece. I observed and tape recorded each session.

Each student in my English classes is asked to create an individual magazine as an end-of-the-year writing project. The requirements call for a "Forward," an "About the Author," and a minimum of five pieces, all related to a "theme" and written in at least three different modes. For her end-of-the-year magazine, Becky used two of the pieces originally composed in the research sessions. It is significant, also, that her theme, "Then and Now," and her magazine title, "Accepting Changes," both came from the composing-aloud sessions. These decisions underscore the seriousness with which Becky wrote and the value she placed on the pieces she created in those sessions.

Since she had written essays at each previous session, I asked her to create a poem during our last session. Becky was a talented poet—she had been selected for a Gifted and Talented Poetry Workshop the previous summer—and I wanted to observe how she went about creating a poem. She began very quickly, rehearsing her ideas in a list. In less than four minutes she moved from surprised reaction at the imposition of form to discovery of the central theme of her poem.

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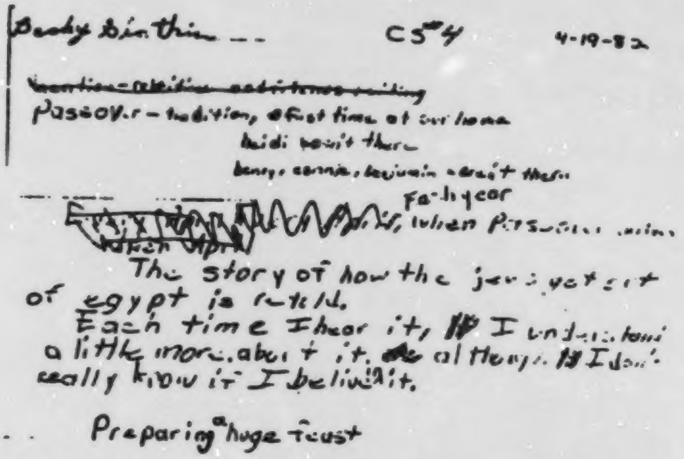
Write a poem? Oh, so this time you're giving me a specific mode. Oh, that's weird. Okay. Write a poem. Poem. What should I write about? *(pause)* Poem. What could I write a poem on? *(pause)* Oh gosh. I'm not sure. Let me think. I'll list a few things here. Let's see, I could write a poem about *(pause)* vacation, or, what else could I write a poem about? Oh gosh. *(pause)* I don't know. Vacation. I don't want to really write about vacation. What could I write about vacation? I could write about . . . *(pause)* Oh well, I know one thing I could write about. Passover. What could I write about Passover? I could write about *(pause)* tradition about it, or, vacation. I could write about *(pause)* relatives and friends visiting. Oh gosh. Passover, tradition. Something. . . I don't really want to really write about vacation, so I'll cross that out. Passover. I'm trying to think of something else about Passover that I could write. Something that was different or something that happened. Let me think. Um, *(pause)* it wasn't the same.



Becky Binthin — C5-4 4-19-82

~~vacation-relatives and friends visiting~~
Passover – tradition, first time at our home
heidi wasn't there
benny, connie, benjamin weren't there
Family car
~~[illegible]~~, when Passover comes
The story of how the jews got out of egypt is retold.
Each time I hear it, I understand a little more about it. although I don't really know if I believe it.

Preparing a huge feast

Figure 1. Composing aloud session #4—"Accepting Changes"—rehearsal

After writing her list, Becky moved without hesitation into a first draft. She composed five different openings but was not satisfied with any of them. Thirteen minutes into the session, Becky started writing on a new sheet of paper. She produced several paragraphs filled with details about her recent Passover experience. I felt anxious as I watched her write sentence after sentence. Does she remember, I wondered, that her task is to create a poem?

While creating "Accepting Changes," Becky reread her work frequently. She had employed this technique in previous composing aloud sessions. Becky returned regularly to a line or to the beginning of the piece to read it over, both to create the flow of ideas that carried her further into the piece and to reacquaint herself with her theme. Whenever she started a new piece, Becky soon discovered what she wanted to say and how she wanted to say it. She rarely faltered, and she overcame momentary blocks by rereading. Sondra Perl speaks about "recursiveness" in writing. As I observed her, Becky certainly was a recursive writer.

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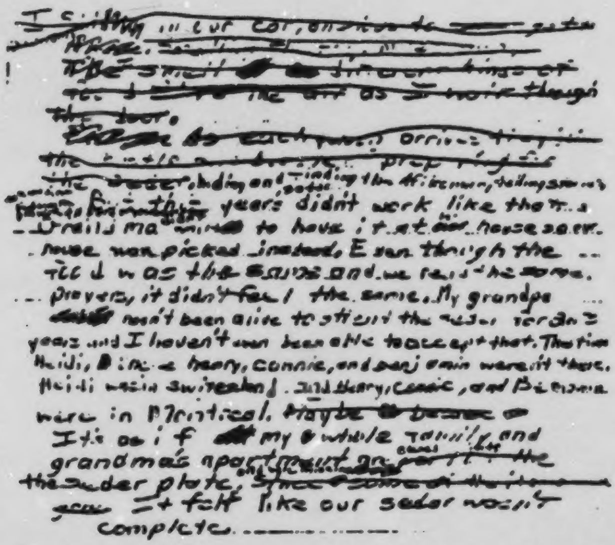

Figure 2. Composing aloud session #4—"Accepting Changes"—first draft

Another common feature of Becky's writing process was her search for the "perfect" word. Becky wrote painstakingly, looking for just the right word to communicate her ideas. In "Accepting Changes," she became dissatisfied with the phrasing in one line, and so she reread the entire piece to bring forth the word that captured her intent:

> ". . . Henry, Connie, and Benjamin were in Montreal." *(pause)* Okay. "Maybe— maybe— maybe because we . . . maybe." No, I don't want "maybe because." Wait. "It's as if all— it's as if our whole family— my whole— my whole family and grandmother's apartment are part of the Seder plate. Since— since— since some— some of the items were gone— since some— were gone—" *(pause)* Wait. Let me read this. (Becky rereads entire piece) "Hiding and finding the Afikomen, telling stories . . . It's as if my whole family and grandma's apartment are— are—" Oh! I know! "—are e-t-c-h— are etched into— are etched into the Seder plate *(pause)* and *(pause)* were— were missing."

It took Becky four minutes to find "etched" and to construct the fifteen-word sentence in which it appears. This perseverance manifested itself in all her composing aloud sessions.

And then came that moment when Becky sensed she had finished creating the raw material for her thoughts about "accepting changes" in life. She put her pencil down, looked at the page and a half she had written, much of it already crossed out and scribbled on, and said, "I have to rewrite this so I can see what I have." On a new sheet of paper, she wrote the first line, "Hiding and finding the Afikomen." She read the next two lines aloud and paused. Next, very simply and confidently, she said. "Now I'll put it in poem form," as though doing so were the

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most natural thing in the world. Becky was undaunted by what I saw as the immensity of the task before her—the synthesis of raw words into poetic structure. Moreover, she set about that task with no less vigor than she had demonstrated in the first part of the session. She had just spent half an hour writing prose. In less than eight minutes, she crafted a poem from that prose. And here I am, some time later, still amazed that a thirteen-year-old student saw a way to create meaning from rough, unshaped sentences, and the only visible signal of transformation was her simple declaration, "I'll put it in poem form."

> Accepting Changes
>
> Hiding and finding the Afikomen,
> telling stories,
> taking turns reading the prayers,
> all part of previous Seders.
> This year's Seder wasn't the same.
> Grandma didn't want it at her house.
> It was at ours instead.
> Even though the food and prayers were the same,
> it didn't feel right.
> Not having Grandpa was part of it.
> But this time Heidi, Pat, Henry, Connie, and Benjamin weren't there.
> It's as if my whole family and Grandma's apartment are etched into the Seder plate.
> And this year our Plate was not complete.

Why was I so astonished? On two counts. First, as a reader, I was struck by the quality of the writing. In a short writing period, Becky had selected and then described a recent event in her life, and in a few words she had captured its significance. When I interviewed her about this piece a year and a half later, Becky recalled:

> I think it was right after Passover. That was the main thing in my head because I saw all the differences, because it was at my house and all that. You had said I could pick whatever I wanted to write about, so I thought, and I got a topic. I wrote down some ideas. I used to always write down in a little square the ideas that I had. And then I started writing it. And then somewhere when I was writing it, I wrote something about me accepting the changes that were made over the years in the Seder tradition.

Second, I did not expect a thirteen-year-old student to be able to transform prose into poetry with such ease and artistry, to winnow out the wheat from the chaff so quickly and skillfully. Where I had misgivings as she wrote prose, she knew at all times her general intent and her specific task: to create a meaningful poem.

"Accepting Changes" is about growing up, about maturity, and about looking back and reflecting on the past. It is a poem filled with the wisdom of youth. It was precisely this that also astonished me—that Becky could produce such reflective wisdom. This little wisp of a girl, possessed of such keen insight, understanding, and empathy with others as expressed by her feelings in the words and

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THE TEACHER AS WRITER

Ross M. Burkhardt

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Shoreham, NY 11786

I. Introduction
II. Grist For the Mill
III. Activities
IV. Observations
V. Concerns
VI. Assessment
VII. Conclusion

2-45

THE FIRST DAY

It's the first day.
In they come --
Some pausing hesitantly
At the door,
Wondering and waiting,
Others boldly asserting
Their presence
As they stride to seats.

Heads swivel,
Eyes contact the classroom
Posters and pictures
(Multi-colored images)
Meet curious glances.
Saving seats for friends,
Adjusting clean-covered notebooks
Filled with clean ruled sheets,
They sit, expectantly,
In crisp clothing.

For some,
The boredom of August
Gone at last.
For some,
The restraints of structure
Unwillingly accepted.
For most,
An unexplored world awaiting.
New seats permit new perspectives,
New possibilities, new patterns.

The student asks:
"What does he expect of me?"
"What is this room all about?"
"Who is this teacher?"
The teacher asks:
"Who are these people?"
"What are they all about?"
"What do they expect of me?"

A simultaneously shared journey
Through days and months ahead
Beckons,
But for now,
All is new and trembling
Because
It's the first day.

2-46

I. INTRODUCTION

Each fall, the first words my eighth grade English students hear me utter come from one of my poems. Originally composed during a summer writing workshop, "The First Day" captures September's promise of opportunity. In sharing this poem with them, I am consciously working to establish myself as a member of the community of writers in the classroom. In this way, I become the teacher as writer.

I believe in writing with my students. When pieces are assigned, they are my homework, also. In class I share my writing regularly, both drafts and process writing. This sharing introduces a new dynamic into the relationship I have with my students. They learn that I struggle, just as they do, to make meaning when composing. They learn that I understand their frustrations with writing. My writing serves as a model, and through it they learn new ways to approach specific writing tasks. They feel encouraged to do so because they know their teacher is completing the same assignment.

Why do I share my writing with my students? First, I enjoy writing and know that mine needs an audience. Second, my writing becomes a means of documenting events of the school year. Through writing I can communicate directly with students on various issues. I keep a teaching journal of what transpires in my classes. Writing is an outlet for my creativity. Writing on a regular basis helps me sharpen my skills as a communicator. Ultimately, I share my writing with my students because it works -- it motivates them to write better. It also makes the task of writing more tolerable for them. As one student succinctly put it, "you're doing it with us, so it's not like you're torturing us."

The practitioner who teaches his skill can influence his charges far more by example than by explanation. Thus, I become the teacher as writer in my classroom, using my own writing as a means of teaching my students about the composing process and the possibilities for them in written expression.

II. GRIST FOR THE MILL

Students in my English classes write regularly in journals, as homework, and as classwork. During the first months of the school year we discuss examples of different modes - personal essays, dialogues, free verse poems, narratives, and interior monologues. The students select their own topics as they write in these modes. The topics I choose when completing these assignments generally come from events that occur during the course of a school day. In a sense I am constantly recycling experiences as pieces of writing. Kids love reading about themselves and thus are interested in what I write. One poem described the practice some of the more socially advanced students had of meeting at the school exits at the end of the day to bid each other adieu:

THE PHENOMENON OF THE EIGHTH GRADE FAREWELL

(dedicated to the Goodbye Guys and Gals)

Mirror, mirror on the wall,
What is happening in the hall?
When the school clock strikes two-twenty,
From within the library
If I stand on tiptoes, I
Can be an eighth grade romance spy.

Almost every single day,
J. and M. and N. and K.
And other "letters" linger late
For a most important date:
To say goodby to someone sweet
And share the warmth of body heat.

If I wander through the exit,
Just like that my presence wrecks it
For the cuddling, clutching pair.
She turns red; he fluffs his hair.
Hurriedly they break apart,
Leaving matters of the heart

Till I am gone, and then resume
Their fond farewell -- so I assume,
For I do not look back at them,
Nor walk right up and say, "Ahem!"
Nor tug upon their sleeves or coats,
Nor send advisors quickie notes.

Rather, I recall my days
Of radiating in a haze,
Of wearing blissful grin on face,
Of glowing from a brief embrace.
And so, I ask, what's wrong with this --
A tender, eighth grade goodbye kiss?

This poem was shared with five "couples," and for weeks afterwards I heard warm reactions to it, not only from them but from other students with whom they shared their copies.

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Another piece, OBSERVATION, was inspired by the looks I saw on the faces of two of my students. OBSERVATION was written in class as a demonstration of multiple drafts. I watched the students as they came in, knowing only that I was going to write a poem with them observing me writing and then analysing my writing process. When I saw the two girls and felt their resistance to being in class, I knew I had my topic. Using an overhead projector, I began by jotting observational notes in list form. These were turned into a rough draft, which I then polished into a second draft. The following day I brought in the third draft of the poem:

OBSERVATION

"How did it go today?"
she asked him cautiously
across the dinner table.

"I saw it again
at the beginning of class,"
he replied.
"Amid the incoming bustle
I noticed a head
bent forward at a desk,
a still face in a swirling crowd.
Hair in her eyes, body twisted,
I sensed her shield was up.
I felt blocked out, not knowing why,
yet wanting to help."

"Did you say anything?"
she ventured.

"No. I wondered
what might have happened before class
to put that look on her face,
and if she wanted it changed.
I wanted to do something,
to reach to her, touch her,
but --"
He hesitated.

"But what?" she prodded.

"-- but something stopped me.
Would I be intruding? Was I the cause?
What did I do? How could I help?
And then the press of others
forced the moment past.
I began class vaguely dissatisfied,
somehow incomplete."

During the year my students memorize and recite poetry. I provide them with several "classics" to choose from, and a week later they are evaluated on the basis of accuracy, poise, and expression. C FEVER, a parody of the Masefield classic that many students memorized, allowed me both the opportunity to provide them with an example of satire and the chance to recycle the experience of reciting a poem in front of the class.

C FEVER
(with apologies to John Masefield)

My grade goes down to the C's again,
to the lowly C's and the D's,
And all I ask is memory
and an end to knocking knees.
And the first line of the first verse
and my knees still shaking,
And the second line and it's getting worse,
and my voice now breaking.

My grade goes down to the C's again,
for the call to recite a poem
Is a clear call and a fearful call
that sets my mouth afoam;
And the missed word and the blown line
and the fear of crying,
And the clenched hands and the blank stare
while I'm up here dying.

My grade goes down to the C's again,
where the grades are below C level,
To the failure's way and the mumbler's way:
recitations are works of the Devil!
And all I ask is a straight face
from a laughing fellow Grover,
And a quiet room and polite applause
when the long task's over.

"Grist for the mill," then, is my way of describing those incidents somehow destined to wind up as topics for pieces of writing that I then share with my students. Reflecting on my teaching, I considered the question, "what works in my classroom?" The following response from my Teaching Journal explains why I write about the events of the school year:

> TJ-11/2/81 -- What works in my classroom? I have recently developed the concept of "grist for the mill," the articulation of a practice of many years

standing, one which stems originally from TEACHING AS A SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITY. Neil Postman wrote of the judo-Christian ethic, taking whatever comes your way and pulling it toward and past you and incorporating it into the stream of things, rather than throwing up an invisible Gardol shield to ward off and repel outrageous comments, new ideas, suggestions, events, happenings, etc. And so I try to take anything that occurs and weave it into a tapestry of events for the kids, sometimes via slides, sometimes via poems, sometimes via acknowledgement in class. Go with the flow? Perhaps. But perhaps more accurately, recognize the flow, be aware of it, and know how to rechannel it before it gets too far afield. I try to connect a lot of things so that one event is seen as part of the whole, as impacting on the rest of the events. I try to be myself. If I am happy, it shows. If I am upset, it shows. I commemorate things that occur and lift them from humdrum reality to exalted status as "events," and thus give meaning and memory to the lives of my students.

III. ACTIVITIES

There are many ways I write with and about my students during the course of the school year. One important approach is a daily entry in my Teaching Journal. Most often in the morning and at times after school, I take ten or fifteen minutes to type up what happened yesterday, what my plans are for the coming day, what is happening with me and in the school, and how I feel. I record successes, failures, frustrations, breakthroughs, and the like. Doing the morning entry helps clear my head and structure my goals for the day. It also provides a valuable record of where I've been and how certain writing activities evolve.

On regular occasions I share excerpts from my teaching journal with my students so that they might better understand me and what I am about. Most important to me, however, is the documentation this journal provides regarding what happened and why:

> TJ - 4/1/82 -- I wrote more of my piece during in-class writing time today (and Kerrie, who had gotten wind of it, kept trying to sneak a peek at it) -- it is called "The Phenomenon of the 8th Grade Goodbye," dedicated to the Kiss-em-Goodby Guys and Gals. I used first initials of some kids and plan to do a warm parody of the situation as

2-51

> seen by a teacher checking out the scene. It started when I stumbled across Margaret kissing Alfie goodby on Monday afternoon -- and she will get one of the copies of it, for sure. Jeanne mentioned that incident at our Tuesday morning conference, and so a piece is inspired by student actions. Grist for the mill.

I also become "the teacher as writer" when I do the same writing assignments as my students. They expect me to complete them, and they support me in getting my work done. I have suffered pangs of guilt for not having completed an assignment on time, and I have experienced joy when kids ask to see my piece and it is complete. Doing an assignment with my students helps me to understand better the nature of the writing challenges and tasks I assign. It also helps me when evaluating their work, for I gain a sense of what the task entails by doing it. Each January I assign a five-part "Letter to Self." The assignment calls for students to write about themselves, their world, their activities, their family and friends, and their future. I keep the completed assignments and return them in June, just before the kids finish 8th grade. I had not planned on doing the Letter To Self until one of my students asked me a question:

> TJ - 1/13/82 -- At the suggestion of Jeanine H. ("Mr. Burkhardt, are you going to do this too?"), I am doing the "Letter to Self". I spent time in class yesterday planning what I wanted to say, and after I type this entry I want to get something done for today's English class to share with the kids. They seem to be taking the writing seriously -- most kids started planning yesterday, and the sections they wrote that I looked at showed care, length, and involvement on their parts.

On another occasion, I wanted my students to understand what a writing group was, how it functioned, and what took place when it met. With the help of a fellow teacher and a writing researcher, I did a demonstration lesson in class. The three of us sat in the center of a circle while my students took notes from the outside on what they observed as we discussed my piece.

> TJ - 10/22/81 -- I had a rough draft of my piece, AMERICAN CORNERS, something I dashed off a week ago. The kids sat in a circle, the three of us inside facing each other, and the videotape camera

> rolled at the side. I read the piece twice and then got feedback. It was a strange sensation, because I was tired; I had a sore throat; I was nervous about wanting my piece to be appreciated and understood; and I wanted the class to benefit from this "lesson." Di [the other teacher] ran the class and did a great job, and eventually she got kids to take her's and Sondra's [the writing researcher] places in the writing group. One major problem was that my piece was too abstract, too vague, too "intellectual(?)" for the kids. It went above their heads and that made it difficult for them to respond effectively. However, some nice things happened. Frank drew a picture of his mental image of the poem -- an old man with a stick and a flowing robe standing on a pile of garbage by a sign saying, "Welcome to New York." Mike and Barbara, who are generally reticent, spoke out with contributions about their understanding of the poem. I plan to revise the piece and take it through a couple of more drafts and show the kids my process so they can see the evolution of a piece of my writing and have it serve as a model for what they can do with their own. I observed that once the kids were out of the small group inside and back in their places in the larger circle, they were able to talk more easily about the piece and share their ideas. It is a scary situation to be so singled out as to have every eye in the class watching you. Some kids talked about the ad with the Indian by the L.A. freeway with the tear rolling down his cheek. My initial sense was that the demonstration had not gone well because of the level of the piece - over the heads of most of them - but in talking with Di and Sondra later, I re-evaluated that, and I think the kids benefitted by seeing an author struggle for meaning with a piece of writing. If the piece is good, I'll suggest that we include it as part of our multi-media show (everything is grist for the mill).

A major project in my classes during past years has been the creation of a multi-media project on a general theme - The Future, Survival, Teens Today, The Year In Review, Famous Americans, etc. Students keep a BUMP (Burkhardt Unique Media Production) Journal documenting their involvement in and understanding of the show. I respond to their entries with questions and comments of my own, and the BUMP journal becomes a vehicle through which we communicate with one another. I also keep my own BUMP journal and regularly ask students to read and comment on my entries, just as I respond to theirs.

Reading a set of BUMP journal entries and then communicating in writing to each student is not an easy task. However, students let me know in many ways how important my comments to them are. Early in the school year I showed a media production (done several years earlier) to give the kids a model for discussion purposes. It was called "When I Was A Kid..." (WIWAK) and was all about teenagers. In my teaching journal I recorded the following comments:

> TJ - 10/5/81 -- The BUMP journal entries were fascinating for me to read - reactions to WIWAK and reactions to my own comments. Several kids mentioned that reading my response to what they had written gave them a model, and they appreciated that. Jesse mentioned it, as did others. On their next BUMP journal entry, most kids doubled their output because I had, in most cases, written more to them than they had written to me. I was consciously trying to show them the importance I place on the journals by commenting so heavily. And the stuff they wrote was also great -- they had so many insights into WIWAK I couldn't believe it. I noted in several journals something to the effect that when I do a slide show, I plan in subtleties but I am never sure if the viewer sees all of them. They saw so many things that I came to appreciate their powers of observations a great deal more -- they are sharp kids. I noticed during the show that they were unusually attentive to it, but I did not realize how attentive until I read their journals. It was a super experience for me. I showed "Fourteen" [another media show] on Friday and had them write again, and today I collected the third BUMP entry . I really feel this year's show will be better because of starting the BUMP journals so early in the year -- we will have established many things before we begin to talk specifics.
>
> Many of the kids liked the interviews that were on the soundtrack. They said "it was something I could relate to" and quoted parts of the dialogue of the show. I had to bust my butt to get the journals done, and in fact I did three of them during the showing of "Fourteen" and finished up five others on Saturday morning and delivered them that day (Keri's, who I saw at the library; Marc's - I drove it to his house after the library showings; Jana's -- I walked over to see her; and Danny's and Greg's, who were my tech crew at the library showings for Friendship Day. Greg, by the way, got the only "N" I gave on the journal entries -- he had hastily scribbled a shallow reponse, no date,

> no real effort, and last year this kind of thing drove me nuts. Without wanting to traumatize him and his attitude towards writing, I decided that he and others have to meet minimal expectations if they are to receive credit for the assignment. He is capable of better work, and so I made the decision to "zap" him with the low grade. I do not know how he will react -- I wrote him a two page critique of what he had written and asked him many questions and suggested ways that he could improve his third BUMP journal entry, due today. We shall see what we shall see. There are always risks one takes in teaching, and in this case I am taking a calculated risk at slapping him down via a grade in hopes that he will understand my expectations. Last year cajoling did not work all that well, so I am bringing out the heavy artillery earlier than normal in a school year. And why not?

As a way of having students pay attention to what happens when they compose, I require them to keep process journals. They write entries before, during, and after drafting a piece of writing, and I read both the piece and the process entry and write comments and questions back to them in their process journals. I keep my own process journal with entries about the pieces I compose. The year becomes one of sharing discoveries about my composing process with them, they sharing their processes with me. In this mutuality of sharing, we learn from one another. One student wrote a poem using an approach that I had never employed. I tried the approach on a piece (OBSERVATION), made transparencies of my drafts, and shared the entire process from original thought through to fourth draft with them. I noted their reactions in my teaching journal:

> TJ - 4/22/82 -- Class this morning went fairly well. The kids were eerily intent listeners and watchers as I shared my "resistance" piece with them. I think the intensity with which I went through my writing process either startled or amazed or captivated them -- they were as attentive a group as I have ever seen. Also, the subject matter of the piece - my feelings about their resistance to the class - made it real, and this also held them. I was pleased with my ability to demonstrate my own process to them, and it is my hope that when they do some of their own writing for their magazines they will remember/learn from my example and use the process of drafting and revising to help themselves write. It would be nice to read a comment in a process journal about that.

Publishing is a major part of the writing process, and it occurs in many ways in my classroom. One year I had the good fortune to have Ron Overton, a poet, work with my students for a week. He taught several poetic forms, and then we published OVERTONES, a collection of poetry with at least two poems selected by each student from the poems written that week. Each student also does his/her own individual magazine. The requirements are that it include at least five original pieces done in at least three different modes, an "Introduction," a "Foreword," and an "About The Author." Students do this project as the culmination activity in a year of writing, and the results are good. I do my own magazine along with them.

We publish class anthologies of student writing on a regular basis in my English class. Students draft, revise, and edit their pieces for publication. As one of the writers in the classroom, I also submit a piece for publication in the anthology.

After the class anthologies are published, I have students write letters to the "authors" (their fellow classmates) and comment on the pieces they've read. This is one aspect of letter writing that occurs in my classroom, and I do the assignment as well.

11/18/81

Dear Peter,

I have just read your piece, "The Wicked Shot." Having driven down the street by your house and having seen kids play street hockey there, it is easy for me to visualize what you wrote about. Several kids get together, they play hockey for a while, but after a time they get bored and start to mess around. The same thing happened to me when I was a kid -- your piece reminded me of the time I threw walnuts at cars passing on Route 32 in upstate New York and a guy got out (after we hit his hubcap with a walnut) and chased us into the woods. This part of growing up -- the risk-taking and "being bad" and running away from angry adults -- doesn't seem to change. So it was easy for me to understand your piece. I think that is one of the reasons I liked it -- it awakened in me a memory of a similar time when I did something like that. Whenever we read things and can identify with them, we like them better. You talked about running off into the woods and hiding from the guy -- how well I remember doing the same thing myself!

One of my favorite parts in your piece is where you wrote, "So we waited impatiently until a black Chevy with mag wheels came by." The vivid details are there --I can see the car turning the corner and you guys getting excited and ready to blast away at this invader on your street.

When the guy turned around, did he do it slowly or rapidly? Did the car stop suddenly or come slowly to a halt after you blasted the windshield? How long did you guys have to wait before the car came around? How did you feel when you saw him turn the corner? Was the black car the first car to come along, or were there others that you let go by? Where did you hide? Could you see him from your hiding place, or could you just hear him? I wonder if you were to revise your piece again and respond to some of these questions whether the piece would improve? What do you think?

Sincerely,

Ross M. Burkhardt

Models motivate students. One activity I did was to compose a piece aloud in front of the class. I sat in the center of a circle and asked the students to select a topic based on one of the many posters adorning the walls of the classroom. Once they agreed on a topic, they were asked to take notes on everything I said and did as I wrote my way through the piece. This "composing aloud" session lasted about ten minutes and provided them with some understanding of my writing process and, by extension, their own. I wrote about this episode later in the day in my teaching journal:

> TJ - 9/23/81 -- Just did the composing aloud class in which the kids sat in a circle around me while I composed orally on a topic they had selected just minutes before (they picked the Muppets). I wrote for about ten minutes and then led a discussion on what they observed, hoping to give them a better sense of what process is all about by seeing mine on that particular piece, and of what they should be paying attention to as they do entries in their process journals about their composing processes. The kids saw a lot of things, like how I went back and reread things, how I scratched my head, how I used initials and abbreviations for words I didn't know or remember, how I went back and changed things, how I crossed out, how I rehearsed first

> and made a list to get/collect my ideas together, how I used a different kind of opening about radio and led slowly into the Muppets and specifically about Kermit, how I wrote about Kermit because I wanted to narrow the topic down and not be general. Jeanine was particularly observant of what I had done, and Kerrie S. also added a lot to the observations. Kids saw the darnedest things -- they focused on my hands and how they moved when I talked to myself. They commented on my posture -- I wasn't hunched over like they profess to be. I moved towards the paper when I got excited about an idea, they observed. In all, I think it was a valuable demonstration of one way to show process, and I think that the process entries that come in this Friday will be better because of it.

These, then, are some of the activities I do in my role of teacher as writer. It is through these activities that my students come to see me as another writer in the classroom. They are influenced by my style and ideas, just as I am influenced by theirs. I serve as a role model for all writing activities, and my students know that I am serious about the task of writing. I am convinced that one of the reasons for the improvement of the quality of writing in my classroom over the past several years is that I have been a model as a writer for my students, and I have shared ups and downs in my writing with them.

IV. OBSERVATIONS

My daily teaching journal contains both wheat and chaff. I record anything and everything because I do not always know what event of the moment will be significant a month later. I also find that writing in my journal and expressing my frustrations is therapeutic:

> TJ - 9/16/81 -- I feel better for having typed this out. Sharing with a journal is therapeutic. It rambles, but I did feel bad about the class and wanted to dump it somewhere, and this journal got elected. Now I can go on to other things.

Having a place in which to record both successes and failures is something I appreciate. The journal is there to read, reread, analyse, and learn from. And I do:

> TJ - 3/16/82 -- Something went wrong in November or December -- I am not sure what. Perhaps a rereading of my journal would tell me -- the things I did not write about. I do know that I stopped writing pieces - a sign that I was hurting inside. When I feel good, my mind bubbles and I compose lots of pieces. When I feel bad, I do not compose because I do not want to deal with the negative stuff. And perhaps that is it -- that there was a lot of negative stuff that got to me. But what was it, specifically, and how did it get to me?

When I plan class activities, the teaching journal gives me a place in which to explore ideas, design approaches, and plan strategies. Walking into class with a clear idea of what I have in mind because I have already written about it makes my teaching go better.

> TJ - 4/22/82 -- Today in class I want to discuss the pieces the kids came up with and then move on to the guidelines of the magazine itself. I need to type up a page of stuff to hand out to them so they can begin thinking "totally" about the mag. But first I want to see about the issue of shaping the stuff that comes from yesterday's activity. Maybe I can have a couple of kids share how they used their notes and what form they took when they started writing. I am reluctant to share my draft -- am I imposing too much or holding myself up as "better than" them by doing it? Mine is not the only way. I was very conscious of modelling my approach after Becky's, with a slight difference. Her "Accepting Changes" final piece followed in straight order what she had written out in paragraph notes. My "Resistance" piece was an assembly job from the various notes I had taken. Can/will the kids understand this? Will they feel bad if they think they have done it wrong? That is why several examples might help -- so that kids can see that there are several ways to gather raw material and then go about shaping a piece of writing.

My use of writing - for myself and for my students - continues throughout the year. I respond in journals, I write notes and letters, I write my own pieces and process entries about them, and I write poems and pieces to commemorate events in the lives of my students. After several years it seems natural to do. I enjoy it and so do my students. I also believe it has had a profound impact on their writing and their attitudes about writing.

V. CONCERNS

When I share my writing with my students, I realize that I am a mature writer, fluent in many modes, blessed with a creativity for doggerel verse, and unhampered by poor language skills. One of my concerns is whether or not my sharing has a positive effect on all my students. This concern expresses itself in the form of questions I raise in my teaching journal from time to time:

> TJ - 9/16/81 -- Am I too strong a writer to provide a good model for kids? I think I write well, and I have a facility with words, and I know how to create meaning. Yesterday I passed around FOG DOG in all four drafts, and I shared my four process entries with the kids. One of my purposes was to show them my process in creating the poem, to share with them how I did my assignment in hopes that they will see a model and take parts of it as their own and proceed apace. But my former principal used to caution me about being too forceful in a discussion, and I wonder if I am too strong as a writer, too together in my approach to be of any value to them. Is this conceit or is it real? I do not know. Can Toscanini instruct budding musicians? I guess so. What if I scare them off, though? There is always a risk in anything one does. And that's what makes it fun -- taking the risk.

Conversations I have had with students suggest that they appreciate my sharing. One student said, "When you write poems, it helps me with mine. In yours, you change your words around, and I try that and it makes my poems go smoother. I get ideas from your writing." Still, I worry about just how much is enough in sharing, and when I should stop and not intrude further.

Another concern is that students may see my approach as THE way to do things. During one class early in the year, I read my students an entry from my process journal to show them how I handled process writing and to open up some possibilities for them. One girl remarked, "I did my process entry wrong. When you read yours, most of us were embarassed to read ours and had to do 'em over again." How do I draw the line between suggesting examples for kids and straitjacketing them with perceived rigid procedures?

Each time I share my writing, it is like the first time. I feel nervous. I sweat. My throat goes dry. I wonder how they will react to my piece. Will they like it? Will they understand it? Will they laugh in the right places? Or will I be greeted by a crushing silence when I finish? I get in touch with that old fear, non-acceptance, each time I read a piece to the class. While this helps me remember what kids go through when they share, it also is something a teacher who shares personal writing with students should anticipate.

VI. ASSESSMENT

Becoming part of the community of writers in a classroom is a demanding yet rewarding experience. I have due dates to meet in completing assignments, and as a result I understand much better the difficulties my students have. I speak with much more authority when I say, "Yes. I had the same problem with my piece." The students see me as a colleague, as one who shares in their experiences as writers. Whether it is writer's block, a bad ending, an ambiguous title, a fuzzy topic, an underdeveloped character, or a weak plot, when my students have problems with their writing, they know that when they talk to me, they are conversing with someone who shares similar concerns.

Poetry is my favorite mode of expression. Several years ago, very few of my male students wrote poetry with any sensitivity, regularity, or enthusiasm. Since I began sharing my own poetry and process, a great many of my male students write poems voluntarily. In their process journal entries, several boys wrote that they were inspired by a poem of another boy. His hockey poem came about because he admired several poems I had written and shared. Thus we nourish each other.

> TJ - 9/14/81 -- Last year I noted that a good number of kids wrote poems -- especially boys. This surprised me, and I wondered about the reasons. One might be that I set a model by writing poems and sharing them. Another is that the kids have to recite poems in front of the class regularly, and this puts them in frequent contact with this mode. A third reason is that I encourage different modes of expression, and writing poetry fulfills a commitment on their part. All I know for sure is that in the past, I got very little poetry from kids, especially boys, and suddenly last year they were writing quite a bit of it.

We also learn from one another. I get ideas from what my students write, and they get ideas from what I write. This is what a community of writers is all about. This is why I work hard at my writing during the year. It is not always easy, but even the poorer pieces that I share have value for my students. They see that I do not produce a great piece each time out. They see that I need to write several drafts before I can make my meaning clear. Their feedback is important to me. They constitute my writing group.

VII. CONCLUSION

When I hear the term, "a teacher of writing," I imagine a person who teaches writing by writing with his or her students. This is not unlike a track coach who does laps with the runners, a music teacher who plays with the school band, or an art teacher who shares paintings with the class. There are many ways a teacher can share writing with students, and this paper suggests several of them.

One assignment I have done with my students for the past few years is a "Letter of Appreciation" to a person who contributed significantly to the writer's life. I have students write such a letter because I want them to write with care and with feeling, and when they select an important audience, they become invested in the task.

> TJ - 2/24/82 -- The "letter of appreciation" idea seemed to go over fairly well, although in some cases kids did not have an idea of whom they were going to write to. I just wrote both of mine - to Sondra and to Bob Kaplan. They were fun to write, and made me feel good -- I hope the kids get the same kind of feeling from them that I do. When I was explaining the task in class, I was very aware that the assignment was meant to create "impelled" writing. I used the word "perfunctory" in class to describe the "Hi, how are ya?" greetings people extend to one another as they pass in the halls, knowing full well that they are not seriously interested in the other person stopping and running down exactly how he feels. So I hope that the kids will have a chance to really share something from deep inside themselves with another person, as I did.

As teachers, we never really know just what words, gestures, actions, or examples stay with our students. I contend that in sharing my writing with my students, I am encouraging them to be better writers, and I am providing them with valuable examples of how they can communicate through writing.

An opportunity for writing came to me one January when a student was leaving the school district. His imminent departure created a melancholy mood among his classmates. I composed and shared the following poem, and the many students who asked for copies of it reminded me once again of the satisfaction I feel when I become the teacher as writer.

RESONANCE

Have you ever had the feeling
of time flowing by
and you aren't really sure
if hello means goodby?

Have you ever known the pain
of losing a friend
and you find difficulty
in accepting the end?

Have you ever sensed the rush
of haste all around
and you barely feel your feet
skimming over the ground?

Have you ever been confused
by demands on your time
and you modify your pace
to the angle of the climb?

Have you ever asked yourself
what the melody means
and you dream rainbow thoughts
filled with monotone scenes?

Have you ever read a poem
where the meaning isn't clear
and you push it away
in a gesture of fear?

And if I can question
and touch who you are
can the distance between us
be very far?

WRITING GROUPS

In Pursuit of "Magic"

Audre Allison

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1978 The Beginning - A Teacher of Writing

They had begun slowly, first one, then another, some pausing to think or to gaze out the window, but now they were all writing. Heads were bowed, pens raced across the paper. They were after something, and the magic of their quest set their cheeks glowing. The machinery was purring, the surprises spilling out. This discovery stage of writing was clearly an instrument for joy I could see it and I could feel it. It felt like magic. As I glanced up from my own writing I saw heads bowed lower, closer to the paper, caressingly, clearly immersed. It was unmistakably a pleasurable act, almost sensual, yet we tried to teach it as if it were mechanical.

On that day, at that moment an administrator walked into the room looked around, and whispered to me, "When can I come back to see you doing something?" It was evaluation time and she didn't suspect that the very peak of "What I do" was occurring, and I was not sure enough to explain. But Dave, one of my students, understood and he wrote:

> It's like fantasyland. Everyone is writing and I feel like the spaces above everybody's heads are filled with a million ideas and fantasies. If you could actually see what's in the air it would blow your mind.

I loved watching this -- kids in hot pursuit of meaning. I could get this search for meaning going, and the search was usually productive.

This first draft writing and then the sharing of that came easily in my class. I believed in collaborative learning. I wanted everyone talking to everyone else, multiplying delights and discoveries. I knew classmates provided a far more important audience than I. I had learned that from my students. When they wrote, but didn't want to share the writing with classmates, it was usually because it was, in their words, "garbage," in which case I was the only feasable "dump." To avoid being "dumped on," I had made sharing a priority, but I had never had the time to really examine the richness a group provided or the potential power of the group to help the writer sustain the "magic" through the more painful and uneven process of revising toward a chosen goal, a properly groomed and finished piece of writing.

I didn't understand how the production of a finished paper could proceed, beyond the initial burst of discovery in anything but a lonely dungeon , because that was how I worked. I hadn't given much thought to why I was willing to do it. Although at times the Muse blessed me,

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more often she set me spinning and writing was difficult. My method varied between magic and mayhem and sometimes I descended into madness. I reserved a room in my house where I spewed reams of yellow legal pad, ranting in a maze, testing every route, scattering pages about the room. Days were spent in reading, cutting, reseeing, rewriting, pasting, and typing toward a piece that said what I intended. Although I wrote in a busy household with a million interruptions, during these periods I felt isolated and a bit crazy, never wanting anyone to know that writing was ever difficult for me, often carried out in a peculiarly volcanic manner -- erupting unpredictably and wildly, up from a steaming center -- smoldering, and then quieting down, cooling, and finally solidifying, assuming a semi-permanent shape. How could I teach such a method, the only method I really knew?

So, in my classes I continued with the fun of the search and sharing the first composed draft, but then after a few words of wisdom from me, I asked my students to go home and revise. What else could I honestly do, suggest a little *Warriner's*? Although I might briefly feign a connection to the clear, neat, linear, orderly academic coolness of the writing process as plotted step by step in *Warriner's*, association with it actually made me feel contrastingly earthy, unschooled, lusty and primitive, not the proper stance for a teacher, I thought, (although perfectly appropriate for a "writer.")

I pleadingly told my students about caring and shaping, comparing the work and rewards of writing, to painting, to ballet, to music, to sports, but they gave me vacant or sometimes sympathetic looks, as if I were a bit "off" and waited hungrily for the "method" that would take them neatly from search to solution. I could not coax them into the fray; they wanted an easy protected and directed route through the labyrinth with the teacher at the controls. Who could blame them? Of course, my telling them to care was not going to work...telling never works. They were frightened of the hard work of trying to shape what was often chaotic. So, for a time, they continued to be satisfied - or stymied after a first draft, a congenial meeting with the group, and perhaps a cosmetic revision...the end.

It was clear they were pleased with themselves as they generated ideas and pleased with one another as they shared what they'd written, but fine as that was, something was missing. I wanted them to know, not only the joy of generating their own ideas and the fun of sharing them, but also the confidence that comes when the hard work turns into the product they shape - their meaning finding its form. There had to be a way to keep the enthusiasm and fun going, yet find a way to encourage serious and responsible discipline - commitment to the product that would carry the writer along the unmarked and unsure path through revision after revision, proofreading, and editing. Certainly our old methods didn't produce this kind of caring or intellectual growth. I had never thought much about the impetus that impelled me through my messy process. My process was too chaotic; my writer-self and teacher-self separate.

Summer '79 - A Teacher Writing

Early in 1979, Dr. Goldberg, an administrator in our district, had been investigating the Bay Area Writing Project. His search turned up Sondra Perl and Richard Sterling of the New York City Writing Project who came to Shoreham-Wading River to conduct a three week summer workshop for teachers of all disciplines. The workshop was a writing process influenced model based on Dr. Perl's research.

Their first question was, "What are your concerns about the teaching of writing?" I quickly wrote in my journal, "My students have writing groups and they write a lot and share their writing, but how can I make them care enough to shape and revise their writing through to the completion of a fine piece of writing or to the best piece they can produce? They didn't tell me how, but they did put me in my own writing group to write, where I slowly began to find my own important questions.

In my own small writing group, we looked honestly at ourselves as writers and shared not only what we wrote but more importantly, how we wrote. I discovered there was an orderliness to my chaotic and passionate approach to writing. It would never resemble the calm and coolness of the Warriner's method, but it was my method; it worked for me, and it was all right. I could relax.

As writers we shared our attic antics and our dungeon doldrums, viewed them all as parts of a sane process, developed over years. We asked ourselves why we developed rituals that accompanied the various stages of writing, and why it was worth all the trouble. We came to understand that even the best writers among us had days when nothing came out right. Sometimes we abandoned pieces and sometimes the Muse woke us in the night or called us from the stirring of a stew to deliver electric inspiration. Sometimes from one another we learned some trick or habit that helped us write better, and often in our small groups, with sensitive feedback, support, encouragement and constructive criticism, doled out in amounts dictated by the writer, we blazed trails in our lives as writers. And some of us, like many of my students, had come professing to hate writing. The talk of how we wrote generated excitement about ourselves as writers, created empathy and understanding among us and a commitment to one another to continue, and best of all, a real awareness of the selfish pleasures of writing.

Just as each piece of writing became the responsibility of the whole group, so too the pride in accomplishment belonged to the whole group. We became involved in everyone's struggle and waited eagerly to hear each new draft and were delighted if we had been helpful. It was clear the group provided the necessary appreciation to make us feel confident that the struggle was worthwhile - would bear fruit. As I listened to the writers in my group read their finished pieces to the whole workshop, I felt as if I had assisted in a birth. Was this sharing of the whole process as well as the product the missing link that might carry students through the hard work of writing, from creative abandon to disciplined control?

I planned to take my new and exciting discoveries and questions about the process of writing back to my 11th grade students. I was excited by what we might learn if we all began to share the way we write. Would students have already developed methods, rituals, processes that worked for them? Were they aware of this? If the process was messy, did they feel they were doing something wrong or did they feel they didn't know how to write? Did they believe that good writers have no problems? If they understood that writing was difficult for everyone, could we help them to have the confidence to plunge in anyway? Somewhere I had learned to trust myself as a writer, ignore prescribed methods in my own writing, do it my way...now I would trust my students, let them do it their way, listen to them and believe them when they told me how they wrote and what they needed to assist the writing. I would help them to develop responsive groups that I hoped would promote the commitment and discipline necessary for caring about their writing and for meeting deadlines. Maybe by sharing all we could discover together, immersed in the process of writing, this messy and sometimes mysterious business, we'd find better ways of helping one another through the rough spots. So, we abandoned the text books and began to try to learn to write by listening to one another...all of us writers of many years experience.

1979-80 - A Writer Teaching

In previous years I had gone carefully through an elaborate rigamorole of planned activities to establish a warm and trusting atmosphere, finally writing and sharing on the third or fourth day of school. I treated writing as a very fragile activity and moved slowly to establish the rules to make our room a safe place to share writing. This year I was anxious to get to the writing, the seat of the joy, the key to everything else. I knew that the act of writing, reading to one another and talking about our history as writers would establish the warmth and out of that would come the needed trust.

As a whole class we began by writing about our rich past as writers. We shared what we had written, commiserated and laughed at our idiosyncrasies and then we wrote about how it feels to share what you have written and most of us bravely talked about that. When I confessed my frailties they seemed to relax a bit more, but some continued to hesitate, glancing furtively around the room. I suggested we explore that apprehensive feeling by writing about it. We discovered that we all had it; it came with the territory, was expected and was all right. We talked about where it comes from and found that we were afraid what we'd written wasn't good enough, that it would sound stupid, that we didn't write as well as others, or that someone would laugh. It was clear we all had our troubles with writing. None of us wrote clean, clear, pared down, coherent first drafts. Even if we enjoyed writing, we always expected someone to find fault. And, we were our own worst critics. But as we all confessed our problems with writing, the trust grew and we began to really feel we could help one another.

We began to understand why so many of us preface a reading with an excuse or an apology. As we talked we realized that we all felt a heavy responsibility to entertain, even in our early drafts. We were all afraid of being judged. We agreed that we all wanted to hear what others had written and how they had gone about it. We agreed that sharing before the writing was finished would be helpful, and therefore we felt the need to muster the strength to do it. We knew that if we wanted to be more comfortable, we would have to be kind to one another. We would not judge and we would not evaluate. We learned just how much of our whole selves is invested in what we write and that, of course, we would always be made vulnerable by sharing what we wrote, and of course, none of us, not even the teacher should ever take advantage of that vulnerability.

After this, we wrote about how we could make our classroom more comfortable, a real place for writing, and the next day we began talking about that. We listened and responded and by the end of the period we were setting up rules for a writing classroom.

Our rules for beginning were simple. We would continue to break into small writing groups. We would be serious working writers. We would be responsible to the other writers in our writing groups. We would aim to be genuine at all times. We would listen attentively whenever anyone read. We would respond honestly but kindly. No one would ever be "wrong" though opinions would surely vary. We would not make negative comments, sounds or gestures The writer would be in charge, would ask for what he or she wanted, would hear responses, and would make the decisions about the writing. And, we would share not only what, but how we wrote in hopes of finding better ways to help one another shape meaning, and to get rid of obstacles that stood in the way.

We set up our small writing groups but continued to come together in a large group to share pleasures and problems. Each time we hit stumbling blocks, we stopped to write, and to talk about the problems, trusting ourselves as writers. But we also discovered it was just as important to tell each other about the good times when writing worked its magic. Since none of us owned this language of description; we had not been cued or clued from the past, we had to dig, first for the feelings, then the images to convey the feelings, and then the language to convey the images. Sometimes it got wildly fun. The metaphors flew.

> It's like free falling. You're scared to death and trying to stay in control and then it's like suddenly you get hold of the rip cord. Your parachute opens and you're just floating along.
>
> Sometimes I'm like a geyser shooting up in the air clear and fresh and with a lot of force. Then sometimes I'm plop, plop, glub, blub, like little muddy bubbling puddles.
>
> It's like the flood gates are opened and water that has been dammed up inside comes pouring out and there's no stopping it, like finding out something you didn't know you knew.

A creative energy was released. It was fun and it was visible fun! Everyone wanted to get in on the fun, and writing was the vehicle. For some this opened new territory.

It was important to come together as a large group, but it was in the small writing groups that the hard work took place. Early in the year I saw that the key to the productive small writing group was the alert and interested responder. If group members seemed interested in what a writer had written, then the motors started humming and the productivity amazed me. So much achievement in school is based on competition, that interest in the work of another does not always surface spontaneously. Years of reserve have been built up. My students readily and eagerly now discussed their own writing in these small groups where they trusted one another. Talking about oneself is always fun, but what could be done to promote that essential "interest" in the work of another student? We'd have to move mountains, I thought.

I stewed over this question with other teachers. In our summer workshop we had worried that this key ingredient would be the difference between our adult-teacher groups and a child-student group. The intimate setting of the small group was essential, but teachers had the adult ability to summon up interest when it waned. Surely students couldn't master this. Then one day in our spontaneous writing we tackled the issue of "What I need and want from my writing group." We shared our responses with the whole class. Laureen wrote, "I want you to be interested! If you're interested in what I"ve written, I will be." To my surprise everyone understood and agreed. Sharon added, "When you're not interested, I want to tear it up and toss it in the garbage." These were writers taking charge. Once again, writing and talking about writing, listening to the writers, believing them, brought more and better solutions. I had treated "interest" as a mysteriously elusive adult ingredient; they had simply accepted it as a basic ingredient. "Be interested - Show it!" The command became number one on our list of rules.

In these small writing groups we began to address the question of how to promote intellectual engagement, to generate the energy, interest and commitment needed for shaping and revising writing. This required the more intimate setting. The chore is more concrete, but the writer is more vulnerable. Searching for a topic expects and accepts wild forays into new territory and can be done with courageous gusto, but revision is done with a critical eye, with a goal, a pulling back, a paring down, a sorting out or reaching out in a designated direction, and coming back to the group with perhaps several drafts, pursuing that goal. The results would be judged. There would be something akin to being "right"or"wrong." "Does my piece get the reaction I hoped it would?" "Am I achieving what I set out to do?" "Am I on to something better?" The writer needs this audience. It is a testing ground. But, the decisions rest with the writer.

A lot of interest, support and encouragement was needed to carry the writer on. The strong and close relationships helped them to work together effectively and there was always a close search for what was working. We worked on the skill of pointing to specifics and learning to say, "this is what I hear or feel or see or am reminded of as I listen. Is that what you intended?"

If the responders helped in an interested way, the writer was spurred on to make decisions, to revise.

> I turned on my stereo and wrote straight out for about an hour. I thought I had a masterpiece, but then as I read it to my group nothing seemed to gel. I could tell by looking around that it did not go over very well. I didn't see my usual friends, instead I saw very confused strangers. When they tried to tell me what they heard, they had a lot of trouble. They found the basic story line, but somewhere inside I had lost it. So I had my work cut out for me.
>
> (Donn)

> When a story is unclear to anyone in the group, I know I need to revise it. I don't always like to do that, but when a story is unclear, you have to. I always try to make sure that everyone responds because if they don't, I could possibly lose something in my writing Not letting a writer know your feelings deprives him of a lot. When I get everyone's response and then I revise it, then I have to test it out on them again.
>
> (Walter)

> One thing was unusual about my group yesterday. We all got the same idea about my piece -- independently. And thus I found the way I then continued.
>
> (Cindy)

> A writing group can help in all stages of the writing process. When the first rough draft is ready I receive suggestions as to how to continue, what to elaborate, what to leave out and so on... From all these suggestions I can choose those that match with my own impressions. After the thematical structure of the essay has been finished, the finer structure of it undergoes a test. Unsuitable expressions are changed. Illogical structures are rebuilt. Then the stage, when I think the essaay is almost ready for final copy comes. Everything in it reads smoothly, connections between all the parts of it seem logical to me. At this time the writing group is most important for me. Most valuable. What seems to me entirely logical may be entirely illogical to them since they don't have my experience, don't know things I know, things that may be necessary for understanding the story. Now they ask questions, they say they don't understand

> this and that and I explain and make notes. This way I find the gaps where people lose what I'm trying to say.
>
> (Michael)

> A writing group is somewhere you go for more than just improving your writing. You go there to share your ideas. It's just talking to someone like you, so if you fail or do something stupid, you see it and you get to erase all of that and do it again only better. It feels safe.
>
> (Suzanne)

> For me the group process has become an inherent part of my writing process. The group offers me a chance to see how the piece comes across. Have I been successful? Have I conveyed my message? But more importantly, the group helps me define my message. It forces me to ask myself questions and to discover things that would have otherwise passed me by. Their response is crucial. Perhaps I will use a suggestion. At other times I will not and this helps because I am forced to make my own decisions about my writing and to understand why I want it that way.
>
> (Alex)

In their small groups suggestions were turned into questions that had to be answered by the writer. "What if you opened right in the middle of that memory instead of introducing it by telling us about how you look back and remember?" The "What if" approach, suggested by Moffett, requires a reply, a testing and a decision. At times the "interest" was so high that responders had to remind themselves not to take over the writing. Sometimes the writer had to assert ownership as Sue reminded her group:

> Never be condescending or mean. Be honest. If you don't understand say so. Say what you think, but understand...you aren't in charge!

As we began to get more comfortable and more demanding in our small groups, the basic rules became simpler. "We do what will help us as writers, and we don't do what hurts." Writers often took charge and became more specific asking the group for the kind of help they wanted. For Lisa, "Don't give me a word, let me find it. Otherwise it doesn't feel like my own and I can't use it even if I like it." Or for Jeanne: "Tell me what point you think

I'm trying to make and help me with an opening sentence." And for Adrienne: "I'm trying to be satirical, does this sound mean and sarcastic?" They could ask for criticism and Suzanne advised responders:

> When you're talking about specifics say exactly why this struck you as important. Ask questions. Why this Topic? Why this style? Why this word or phrase? Asking questions can make the writer understand and perhaps talk out the intent of the piece.

Questions like "Why are you writing this?" "What is your point?""Why is it significant?" forced the writer to reimmerse, going deeper each time as if to a clearer part of the well of meaning. This working toward focus, elaboration and clarification proceeded through draft after draft, the writer in charge, making the decisions. What became apparent, not only in the finished product, but also in the process, was the intellectual progress students were making as they took risks, tested ideas, found relationships, explored possibilities, and made decisions about their writing. Often we wrote the very best we could.

I participated always as a writer and a responder, moving from group to group, modelling the kinds of responses I thought were helpful and sharing what I wrote. I watched and I listened. And, I kept a daily journal. I believed and let them know it, that if the writing pleased them, I would feel it was the best they could do. I questioned what I didn't understand. When students asked, "What do you think of my essay?" I replied by asking first what they thought of what they'd written. "What do you like about your piece?" or "Are you bothered by any part of it?" They answered clearly. "I like the part where I tell about feeling my grandfather's whiskers on my face because that makes him seem alive to me, but I'm still not sure if it ends too fast." (Kathy) A discussion would follow that often led to discovery, a reseeing and a rewriting.

I hoped my trust would sharpen their ability to scrutinize their own work. When they asked, "Is it long enough?" My standard reply was "How long do you need to make it, in order to say what you want to say?" I turned the questions back to them to avoid imposing my judgment I wanted the students to experience finding their own way. If they wrote to please me, I would be taking ownership; their goal would become the frustrating one of trying to please the teacher, and a new one each year. Just as they had understood writing as a way of locating or discovering what they might want to say, now they understood drafting as a way of locating for themselves, the form, the how and to whom, the answers to the rhetorical questions often dictated by the teacher.

Insisting that they please themselves as writers passed along to them a huge responsibility. It meant that when the piece was finished, the writer would have to own it, to say, "Yes, this is how I want it," or "This is how I want to leave it for now; I take the responsibility." They also took the rewards. As Bill said:

> I feel that my new struggling method of writing gives me more satisfaction. Now I can get a paper back knowing it is all mine, and getting the grade I deserve for the work I put in. Though the satisfaction of a good paper only happens about twice a year, my independence and growth have brought me to where I am now. In other words, I enjoy writing and I think I am a better writer.

And Suzanne:

> The responders reacted the way I hoped. I think this may be one of the most entertaining pieces I have written. I have fun reading it. It makes other people happy. I'm also proud that I was able to do what I set out to do. Because I devoted a lot of time to something that I enjoyed after the hardest work was over, I've learned the value of effort.

Many groups functioned so well they literally purred. They paced themselves, developed rhythms and roles. Each member often developed a knack for a certain kind of response and was relied upon for that. Of course, not every group member became a writer who wrote all the way to satisfaction. But those who didn't at least watched the process as it occurred around them and sometimes played a role as a helper and a responder and often were drawn in, catching the fervor that surrounds a piece of writing in the process of "becoming." There was appreciation for the clear and honest response as well as for the clear and honest writing. Often a non-writer in the group began writing.

One group called me over excitedly to report that one of their group who had not been delivering the goods, had suddenly made a great contribution. "Ms. Allison, Ms. Allison! Mike was great! He went right to the heart of the problem in Don's paper that no one else could figure out all week, that none of the rest of us could see. We all knew something wasn't right. It just wasn't making sense and Mike discovered the missing connection."

2-75

Mike grew inches and on the next day, clearly feeling himself a contributing member of the group, he appeared with a draft of his own for the first time in the year.

I began also to see the wonderful paradox of writing groups. In a supportive group setting, individuality is nurtured. As students developed this responsibility to the group, the group looked for and promoted individual thought and expression. These students who might in other places need and seek peer approval, who often succumbed to fierce peer pressure to be like everyone else were here as writers and responders, proudly asserting uniqueness and getting support and appreciation for it.

Attitudes about writing began to change. Writing was no longer something you did for the teacher, it was something you did for yourself. Writing was beginning to be recognized as useful for learning, for making discoveries about yourself and about the world. It was powerful and it was pleasurable. Some of the best writers came knowing this, others were surprised by this newly acquired power.

> Writing used to seem like work. Now I make writing work for me.
>
> (Cheryl)

> It used to be this way: Hand in the first written copy, receive it back with discouraging red marks, then hide it inside my notebook. Not any more though. Now I will work on a piece of writing if it takes one hundred drafts. I've no need for those bloody red slashes.
>
> (Lynne)

> When this year started, writing was simple, just plain, an acceptable essay. There was no understanding of it, of the struggles or the pain that in the end satisfies. I censored my writing. I would only write about certain things and there were things which I would not let anyone learn. Working with my group througnout the year, I got over this feeling. Now I write about everything without any exceptions and I share it with others and with my teacher. I am learning about myself through my writing and I'm experiencing different situations by listening to others. As I got into writing more, I understood it more. The process, writing, is a complicated process which needs not only feelings, but also intelligence and experience. This year was a growing together, learning together, and developing our writing and thinking skills together.
>
> (Cumhur)

> Writing is something of mine, something which I can create and hold, perhaps change beyond recognition. In writing I have the chance to mold and manipulate my words Writing gives me the chance to really think. I begin to understand more what it is that I am trying to convey. I begin to know myself and my world a little better. To deny any student or anyone else the chance to discover these things is a crime.
>
> (Alex)

Yes, we were beginning to understand the "magic" - the power and the pleasure of writing. And, whenever we came together to share our finished pieces, there was the energy, the evidence of lusty enjoyment as they applauded one another. They understood that hard work brings rewards and they understood the importance of an appreciative audience. It was a celebration as we all shared in the cornucopia of delights, the fruits of our labor.

Those were the high points, but there were problems too. We all learned that real writing takes time. Sometimes it emerges slowly or vastly changes. Time slots could not be rigidly assigned - for thinking, for talking, for searching, and for producing our finest prose. But deadlines are a fact of life, could and would be assigned, (with some flexibility we hoped). I wanted my students to be able to survive in a class that demands that. But I worried that the recognition that writing takes time might provide the indigent with excuses to put off writing and still then, whip off that same lifeless prose or perhaps nothing at all.

I worried too when I glanced around the room and discovered conversations about Saturday night, cars, the prom, or tests. I hoped for serious dedication to writing at all times...at least "80% time on task," or I'd feel we were floundering. I'd move from group to group some days feeling as if I were carrying hod, trying to patch the crumbling structure. I needed to remind myself that if there were a better way to engage 100% of my students all of the time...I'd do it like a flash. But there doesn't seem to be that panacea, and at least in small groups the interaction, whatever it is, seems to me more valuable than falling asleep alone at your desk. So when I felt the center would not hold, the first thing I had to do was bring us all together for a kind of rededication, to read to one another from writing in progress, and to take note of the wonderful activity and achievement that was going on around the room. And, second, I had to meet with my own small writing group of teachers and take note of the wonderfully refreshing times we veered off course to enjoy one another, to rare back and laugh, to tell jokes, tell stories, and finally to get back to work on the writing...just as my students did. In this way I refueled. So although the balancing act between freedom and constraint gets shaky, I hang in there because I know of no better way...yet.

Occasionally, when I get frustrated and feel we've failed with someone, I try to think of Steve, a basketball star who considered himself a non-writer (though later that year he wrote a lovely piece about a swimming meet). I try to remember that Steve might never come to have a passionate commitment to writing, no more than I might have to basketball. Still I like to think if he invited me to a game, made me feel welcome and comfortable, not stupid and uncoordinated, I might get caught up in the fun and excitement of the game, and might then even try to play ..to catch the fun of it. And then, perhaps with encouragement and support from the team, I might even try harder, risk making a fool of myself, and I might in the process develop hidden talents and become an adequate player who understood the fun and usefulness of a relaxing or exciting game of basketball. I might at least play the very best I could. But, if I blundered, I hope I'd be encouraged to try again, not ridiculed and forced to build up defenses. On the other hand, I might never get hooked.. Oh the parallels!

Reflections

One question I continue to ask is "What do I teach when I say I teach writing?" And that's an important question for me. What is important to teach? What basic writing experiences do I want for my students?

As an outgrowth of our summer workshop in 1979, my students and I became a part of a National Study conducted by Sondra Perl, where students, teachers, and researchers study the process of writing. My students and I had the wonderful experience of having Nancy Wilson, a researcher with Dr. Perl, in our classroom daily to observe, to discuss, to reflect, to commiserate and to triumph with us. The study allowed me to slow down, required me to look carefully at my process of teaching and to look carefully at writers at work - students, other teachers, professional writers and most carefully at myself as a writer. Many of the basic notions I intuitively believed in, I believe in more strongly. Many of the questions I had, I've been able to answer.

What I saw very quickly was that those of us who write a lot, do so because we find pleasure in it somewhere along the way. Yes there is pain too, but the promise of pleasure impels us. Early in the study I began to ask the question, "Where does the pleasure come from?" I looked to myself as a writer, to my colleagues, and most importantly, to my students for answers. It seems to me that the pleasure comes from having confidence or trust in yourself that you can do it - whatever the writing task, and that writing will be valuable, will bring rewards that come through making discoveries about yourself and your world, through finding surprises in what you know, through making your own order out of your own chaos, through generating ideas from what is yours, through creating new experiences and re-creating past experiences, through finding that you have said something that others enjoy or find interesting or useful. There is the"magic"that put the glow on my students cheeks.

Knowing that possibility of pleasure, strengthens our interest in writing, makes us write more and makes us better writers. We're writing for real reasons. If this is what impels writers, we can't ignore it in school. We ought to foster writing that puts our students in touch with the pleasure and the power, writing for selfish reasons. Now I believe that to provide the necessary basic writing experiences:

1. We begin with a lot of writing about things we care about and a lot of talk about how we write - how it feels to write - what helps us and what hurts. And I listen and join my students.

2. We pay attention to how real writers achieve meaning and structure - forget the step-by-step instruction of text books.

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3. We share what we write in writing groups, testing our writing with a helpful and appreciative audience of peers, a kind of cheering section interested in helping us say what we want to say.

4 We provide time for a piece of writing to emerge, allowing the writer to shape and manipulate the piece, allowing the writing to develop into something that pleases the writer, something that is the writer's own creation so that the writer takes all the reward.

5. We provide opportunities for publishing to widen the audience.

If we can help writers to find their own ability to generate their own ideas, then they won't go scurrying scared to the library in danger of committing plagiarism. I believe that the struggle that lets content find its form, brings huge rewards. And that struggle takes time. We need to give writing much more time than we have in the past. Unreasonable pressure that comes with unreasonable due dates (assign today, collect tomorrow) ought to be abandoned forever. The guilt that follows when we don't have time to write and re-write to satisfy ourselves that we've done the best we could and harsh criticism that tells us that we cannot do it...all retard the writing process Time for encouragement and appreciation, nourish it. In large classes this kind of care must come from the students to one another. One teacher cannot dole out enough.

We've all come a long way and we keep moving. Some of our students have moved on to classes, to college where they do not have groupsso they get their own...or revolutionize a classroom...or suffer a set back. In our school students have begun a writing center because they believe that writers need audience feedback. It's become a part of their writing processes. True, some of the work must still be done in solitude, but we come up for nourishment and we get that from a group.

And now the administrater who visits, comes into my room smiling and joins a group. And if I may quote him:

> Students talk seriously to each other in small writing groups and that makes the act of writing more serious as well as adds luster to the writing itself. I sat in on several writing groups and was consistently pleased by the willingness of students to revise and the precision of student questions

2-80

Though there are many things I think I know and many more I'd like to know, one thing I'm sure of, I must keep writing. I've learned more about myself as a writer. I understand better the differences between my own writing for selfish and pleasurable reasons and writing on demand. I revise energetically and sometimes endlessly with my own poetry and delight (sometimes) in the effects of the change. But I put off and struggle with the revision necessary in academic writing. I need a push, a deadline, an encouraging word...a writing group to keep me moving I must keep writing and finishing to remind myself how it feels down in the labyrinth... and how good it feels when I begin to arise from it.

I haven't answered all of my questions, but I think I understand them better, understand why they are my questions, and I think I know more what I need to do to find the answers. But then answers are ends and not nearly as much fun as the questing toward them... It's that glow again ..Oh joy!

A. Allison

THE SENIOR ESSAY

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THE SENIOR ESSAY

Everyone knows that you can't expect much from seniors in high school. As I walk through the halls or sit in the teachers room the common talk is about how out of it are your seniors this week. I can't talk to another teacher of seniors without hearing the complaints about the lack of attendence, participation or effort. The students call it "Senioritis". In my English class I began to see evidence of senioritis right around the senior trip in the beginning of March. Most of my students went on the three day excursion in body, they all left in spirit. This is the beginning of their 'right of passage' followed by a whole series of events that take their toll on all the potential graduates whether they are aware of it or not. They are accepted to college, reach the golden age of 18, obtain their senior license, go to the prom, participate in the traditional senior cut day, are treated to breakfast by the school at the senior breakfast, receive their yearbooks and finally graduate. It is a long process and through it all they seem to cease to care about school.

Jennifer, one of my best students, is a good example. In the first and second quarters she handed in every assignment, her work was of the highest quality, she never missed a class and was very interested in her grades. In the third quarter she didn't hand in half the work, what she did complete was poor work by her pervious standards and the fact that she failed the quarter didn't seem to have much of an impact. She has recovered in the fourth quarter but she is good evidence of this affliction.

The way my students act reminds me of my year old son. He invented a game, played all over the world, that he plays constantly and enjoys immensely. He starts by sitting in his high chair sucking on his bottle until he is no longer hungry. When full he throws the bottle to the floor and laughs. We pick it up, give it back to him and he holds onto it for a while with a gleeful look in his eyes. Suddenly he throws it on the floor again, laughs and waits for us to start all over agin. This game goes on until we tire of it , his capacity seems endless. He holds on and then lets go and holds on and lets go and works out a whole series of complex relationships in his life through this game. He wants to hold on to all the important objects in his life, his bottle, thumb, diaper, father, mother, and never let go because they bring him joy. He wants to make them part of himself, bring them into his being, forever. He also rejects them, knowing he has to let go of the very objects that bring him pleasure in order to grow and become an independent person. In order to develop a sense of self he has to let go of significant others. Sometimes it is forced on him by the outside world and at other times it seems to be dirven internally.

I see a lot of my students in my son. They can't wait to get out of high school. All their thoughts are on what is ahead of them. They will be going to college in the fall or getting a full-time job, maybe even moving into their own place and high school is just a piece of the past. The only trouble is they still have three more months of school. They need to let go of all the familiar around them in order to establish their own identity. They also are frightened of what is ahead and want to hold onto what they know. High school is easy, by now they know all the ropes, they are the top dogs in the school and they don't want to give that up. Living at home is great, free room and board and now they're old enough that their parents won't be able to tell them what to do. Graduation is forced on the seniors and it is absolutely necessary in order for them to become adult members of the community. Some of them fight it all the way to the stage, others are there six months ahead of time and get bored waiting. I teach them all. I don't just teach them but I ask them to write and I don't just ask them to write, I want good, impelled, committed writing, personal writing, writing from their own experience. This demand on the students is particularly difficult for them to fulfill. It takes an invest of self to produce this kind of work. Some school work allows the student to detach themselves from it, to treat it as separate from the issues that are real in their lives. There is no room for this in personal writing.

It may seem like a contradiction to be asking my students to write in this way when they are rejecting the school and trying to form a new identity. But that is only a part of the tension in these seniors, they are also trying to hold onto what they know and are secure with. Writing allows them to explore both sides of these issues. Often students will write about their friends and how close they used to be and how they would like to have that back. Early childhood memories and good, warm, familial relationships are also common topics. Difficulties with parents, the school and the future are often expressed in the writing. Basically the writing is a place where these issues can be explored and the tension released through the exploration.

2-85

The Senior essay is the culminating writing assignment for the year. It is the last of a long line of writing assignments that my students have produced over the year. I make a great effort to place the demands of the task in the proper context. It is not the first time I have asked the students to take their writing seriously, I ask that every time they write. The goals for the assignment are to write a piece the students care about writing and for it to represent the best writing that they can produce at this time. They have to share the piece in all its various stages of revision with their peers in a writing group. These groups have been functioning all year and their purpose is to help the writer say what he/she wants to say. The groups generally function quite well and whereas they may be able to hand in something they don't care about to me it is rare for them to do that with their classmates. The topic for the senior essay is completely open. It is a fairly lengthy piece, 6-10 typed pages, and they are all to be published in a class magazine. The students can rewrite a previously written assignment for the senior essay or it can be a completely new piece. We spend the month of May working intensely on the piece. We have been building up to it all year by establishing an atmosphere of caring about the writing, working to make it better and sharing it with a wide audience. The timing of the essay is designed to make it part of the graduation exprience. It is one more 'right of passage' to go through, one more time to dig in your heels and see what you have got. It is a way to sieze upon the dynamics of senioritis and use its power to produce better writing. The assignment says to the class that graduating is hard, it takes a long time, it works its way through your being slowly and in mysterious ways and here is one more ceremony for you to participate in before the final march.

So much for the theory of the senior essay and senioritis, how about the practice. The results are mixed. There are many positive signs, a few triumphs and some disappointments. Everyone is going to hand in the assignment and that pleases me greatly. It is probably the first time all year that has been true. I have collected several drafts and without exception the work is being done. At this point in the year I don't believe there is another topic we could be working on and achieve this level of participation. The writing groups are functioning very well. When a student brings in her/his piece to the three or four other students in the group, the other students have done an excellent job of using the skills we have been developing all year in responding to the work. They say back, get the writer to talk about what s/he is trying to accomplish in the piece, look at details and wording and don't evaluate the piece for the writer but let the writer do that himself. They are using these skills in the most effective manner I have seen all year. Also the impact of one's peers hearing your work functions especially well when all adults, especially parents and teachers, are no longer so important.

There have been three really gratifying developments. The topics the students have selected have been excellent. Given the entire world to choose from most of them made good choices. Well over half the students have choosen to work on a piece that they produced this year and they now want to elaborate on and revise. Many of the pieces are ones I would have picked for that particular student to go back to. There was more to be said or it was started and never finished because some other concerns somehow interfered.

Also the topics are ones that the students really care about.

The level of revision in the senior essay is the most intense I have seen it all year. Many students are struggling over particular words in a way that never occured to them before. When I read John's piece, the fourth version of this story, he had underlined all the words he was unsure of. When we confered about the piece I found that I would have picked many of the same words and his level of concern for meaning was really unusual.

Students have sought my assistance on these pieces to a far greater extent than any other piece we have done. Many of my preparation and lunch periods have been taken up with a student going over their work and just talking about the piece. This is in addition to the feedback they are getting from their writing groups. They want me to listen to their writing because they care about it, because they think it is good and they just want as much confirmation of their feelings as they can get. I am glad to give it to them just because it helps to fulfill the goals of the assignment and it is a very pleasing way to spend my time. Their writing shows a lot of growth and I just feel I am doing the right thing as their teacher.

There are still students who are too concerned with length and they let it get in the way of their writing. When I ask why they include a particular section that seemed out of place they respond that they wanted it to be at least six pages. Some students never get past getting the plot right and that persists even in the senior essay. Others can't settle on a topic and whereas I empathize as a writer I find that frustrating as a teacher.

At this point I can't wait to see the magazine and read all the completed stories. I imagine that along with the yearbooks they will save the magazines and thrumb through them in the future

2-88

looking back at what they were and what they wrote.

An Addendum -

I sit here with all the senior essays ready to go to the xerox machine for copying and I have yet to put my own piece into final form for the magazine. Looking at the stack of writing fills me with pride. I feel a real sense of accomplishment as a teacher for having set up a framework to enable these seniors to produce this work. More importantly I am proud of what the students have written. The quality and commitment evident in their writing surpassed my expectations. Many of the seniors held on to this assignment as a way to close out their year with me and even their high school careers. There was a lot of "I did it" when the papers where handed in and a lot of pride from me when I read and graded them.

For the record one student did not do the assignement, just deciding it was beyond him after several starts. Another student produced a long, very personal piece, that will not appear in the magazine at his insistence. Despite all the efforts at building a trusting relationship this year, this particular piece is too close to share in a published form. There were two pieces handed in that I was very disappointed in but the remainder really did represent the best each student was capable of producing now. Some of the work dazzled me and I, at least, will keep the magazine on my shelf to thumb through in the years ahead.

By Popular Demand

Reba Pekala
Miller Avenue School, Shoreham, New York

"Do you have my typed book?" asks Tucker.

"Can we write now?"

"Are we gonna write today?"

"Yes, I have your typed book, Tucker. No, we can't write now, but we will at our scheduled time after snack. Please sit down and let's get the day started."

Lauren slowly puts away her rough draft. Robby reluctantly puts back the blocks he just started to pull out. Dean and Chris color a bit more, then quickly stash everything into their cubbies. Craig and Amy are not ready to settle down; instead, they're debating about a monster movie.

"Derek is sitting nicely; so is Jaime. Lauren and Chris are ready for school to begin. Good morning, Natascha. Take your coat off and join us; we're just getting the day started."

Another day begins in our first grade. Like many other teachers, I have strong feelings about what subjects should be taught in the morning of the school day. I have always believed that children are most alert and ready to attempt "academic" tasks first, leaving the afternoons for activities that require more physical movement. As a result, I scheduled reading groups, sound-symbol learning, auditory and motor perception skills, and handwriting in the morning hours, with snack offering a change of pace. Because of this schedule, I squeezed writing into the short time span between snack and schoolwide recess. During this time, the students became involved in drafting stories, coloring and drawing illustrations, and gathering thoughts for new stories. I conferenced with those children whose rough drafts had been completed. However, this creative atmosphere was always halted abruptly by a glance at the classroom clock.

"We must put our writing things away.

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It's time to go outdoors."

"Can I just read you my story, real quick, Mrs. Pekala?"

"Look at this Smurf I just drew. Doesn't it look real!"

"Tomorrow, can I have the first conference?"

At the sound of my voice, Natascha stands up, still adding finishing touches to her story. David reads his last written page to Kelli. Tucker leaves his crayons and story on the desk top. The recess monitor comes to our doorway and asks, "Are they ready?" as other children beckon us outside with their waves and shouts of excitement.

Creativity and mood cut short again! I was so sure that writing could only take place after the "basic skills" had been completed for the day. Even though we were constantly stopped in the middle of our writing sessions, I continued to teach writing during the same short time span. Our school year continued this way until early one morning in November.

"I'm first," shouts David running into the classroom still wearing his ski mask.

"I'm second," adds Denise cruising around the doorway.

"Did you see that movie last night? The spaceman was great!"

Now Tucker, Lauren, Kelli, and others are filtering into the classroom, joining into conversation about the TV movie.

"Did you see it, Mrs. Pekala?"

"No. But it sounds like I missed something good."

"Yeah, it was super!"

"This movie sounds like a good topic for someone's story."

"Hey, Yeah! Robby, you, me, and Craig can do it together," declares Amy, already getting paper, pencils, and crayons.

Before we realize what is happening, writing is well underway. Robby, Craig, and Amy are going strong in the corner of the room, even adding noises as they work. Chris is busy finishing a previously started story, and Natascha wanders in.

"Why is everyone writing? Did I already miss snack?"

"No, Natascha, you're not *that* late! Did you see the TV special last night?"

She shakes her head.

"Neither did I. But it seems that many of the children did. They liked it so well that they are writing about it now. Maybe Amy could tell you about it. Take your coat off and join in."

The students are writing quietly, excitedly, intensely, all kinds of ways. We write for about 50 minutes, and this is the very first time we are not interrupted by the recess monitor!

This experience was an eye opener for me. To ask students to set aside their interests at the beginning of each school day had been unfair to them. They came into school excited about new experiences; it was natural for them to use writing as a means of expressing this excitement. For students to compose freely, to have rehearsal time to practice writing and to share their work, I realized I had to be willing to make changes.

By beginning each morning with writing, I was concerned that I was sacrificing the basics, but the children taught me that I was reinforcing these skills. Writing includes reading, comprehension, sound-symbol relationships, inferring, and motor skills. Students use auditory skills when they share pieces and reread their own work. I began to see that writing is the integration of all language art skills.

By taking charge of their own writing, the children review skills they have already acquired and prepare for the introduction of new materials. After writing, they move easily into reading groups. The quiet mood has already been set, and they are ready to adjust to group work.

In addition, at the beginning of the day, writing becomes the bridge between students' lives outside school and the activities they engage in at school. Writing is a smooth way for students to make the transition between these two worlds.

So, by popular demand, I changed writing time to the beginning of the school day. The children no longer ask as they come into the school, "Can we write now?" They know that writing is the first thing on our agenda—before taking attendance, before saying the pledge, and yes, even before "the basics"!

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WHAT ABOUT THE STRUGGLING WRITER?

By

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WHAT ABOUT THE STRUGGLING WRITER?

Scene I

It's only 9:05 and yet the first graders in my class have begun to settle down and write. Andy and Michael are working at the reading table.

"Can I sit here, too?" asks Jeff.

"Only if your're quiet," Michael demands, "we're working on our war story."

Jeff chooses NOT to sit there. On the rug Ryan looks at the classroom calendar. Chrissy, Karyn, and Jenny are laughing at Karyn's desk. Mandy and Jamie both are writing quietly by the front chalkboard. Kenny lays his head on his arm, ever so carefully drawing a mummy for his adventue story. Ryan takes the bathroom pass, leaving the room.

Scene II

It's time for me to conference with Craig. I call him over to the conference table and we begin to talk. He has just completed a story about fishing with his grandfather. He really wants to publish this one! When Craig and I are finished, I'll call Sara for her conference.

Over at the round table sits a small quiet boy. Tony likes to watch. His eyes are following Michael around the room.

Meekly Tony requests, "Micahel can I work here?"

"Sure, bring your stuff over!

Together they work, each drawing pictures for their own stories. Michael concentrating; Tony using a crayon, but watching Michael more than drawing. Suddenly Tony crumbles his paper, throws it away in the class trashcan, strolls by the paper bin picking up several sheets of manilla drawing paper, and settles back down next to Michael. Again Tony proceeds to draw, however, he's still more concerned with Michael's intricate drawing.

Scene III

"Good morning everyone. Has anyone seen Chrissy this morning? Kenny, was she on the school bus?" Kenny shakes his head no.

"I guess she's out again today!"

This is a familiar happening in our classroom. Chrissy is often missing from our writing time: either she's not in school, or she's receiving remedial speech help with the school speech teacher. Because of this, Chrissy seems to have a hard time finding consistency with her work, and avoids settling down.

* * * * * * * * * *

Writing in my classroom has changed in the past several years. Ever since 1980 when I took the New York

City Writing Project summer institute on the writing process approach, writing has taken on a new meaning for me and my first graders.

Donald Graves and Lucy Calkins have written about new life and voice that elementary students are giving to their writing. After using this process approach in my own classroom for the past three years, I'm convinced that not only CAN first graders write, but they derive pleasure from it! This experience has been ever so rewarding. My students are now asking, "Today can writing time be longer?"

But as excited as I am in seeing such wonderful success, I continued to have concern for the kids like Ryan, Tony, and Chrissy. They are the struggling writers. The ones that sort of slip by. What is the development of writing for this kind of student? This was the type of question that concerned me when Sondra Perl, the director of the NYC Writing Project, proposed doing a research project in the teaching of writing in my school district. I volunteered to become part of her research team so that I could examine the writing development of my students. Although I don't have final answers, here are some of the observations I've made and the conclusions I've come to.

RYAN: A DESCRIPTION OF A WANDERER

Ryan's first book has no pictures. It is a true story written in November about the Korean baby girl his family is planning to adopt:

RYAN'S DRAFT	CORRECTED VERSION
Mi Sesdr	My Sister
we r a doping a little	We are adopting a
cru grl shey is ol 2 mus old	little Korean girl. She
we got lots uv cloe for hr	is only 2 months old.
she is cuming arad cris	We got lots of clothes
we got a pichr uv hr	for her. She is coming
the and	around Christmas. We
	got a picture of her.
	The end.

After this story Ryan talks with other children a great deal. He also sits by himself drawing pictures. He enjoys using the bathroom pass each writing period, along with finding objects around the room with which to play--a pad from home, pencils, building blocks, and books. He will tear out small sheets of note paper, folding them into miniature airplanes.

In late January Ryan brings up a piece of writing to share with me. He has written this at home:

RYAN'S DRAFT	CORRECTED VERSION
The Hot Rider Andy	The Hot Rider Andy
chaptr 1 The hot rider is hot! He blew up a car. He lost his muffler it blew up. He got a new muffler He blew up a nuther and a nuther car! He got put in jail but he broke aut uv jail.	Chapter 1 The hot rider is hot! He blew up a car. He lost his muffler. It blew up. He got a new muffler. He blew up another and another car! He got put in jail but he broke out of jail.
chaptr 2 He blew up 100 more cars! He blew up a nuther He lost his muffler a gen. He got a nuther muffler. He blew up 2000 cars!!! He got killed but his sun took his plas. His sun did sduts. He was so good. He wus a star. He wus a star star star star. He cae to be a super star! He won oll the series. He is in series.	Chapter 2 He blew up 100 more cars! He blew up another car! He lost his muffler again. He got another muffler. He blew up 2000 cars!!! He got killed but his son took his place. His son did stunts. He was so good. He was a star, star, star, star. He came to be a super star! He won all the series. He is in the world series.
chapter 3 He blew up a motr sicl. He blew up 9000 motr sicl and 9000 cars!!! He blew up a limousine! He blew up a store. He blew up texas. He blew up the hol world. He blew up a alin. He flots in sbas. He s day in spas.	Chapter 3 He blew up a motorcycle. He blew up 9000 motorcycles and 9000 cars!!! He blew up a limousine! He blew up a store. He blew up Texas. He blew up the whole world. He blew up an alien. He floats in space. He is dead in space.

"Some story!" is my reaction. He seems pleased even though I'm not sure he wrote the story. As we talk I ask him about revising parts of it. "No way!" he declares as he turns away from me.

In February I suggest to Ryan that he begin a sequel to this hot rider story. It sounds like a good idea and off he goes. But no product arises, only more trips to the bathroom, more sharpened pencils, and a cleaner cubbie. Starting in March, Ryan talks a great deal with Andy. They talk and draw. They act out some scenes. In Andy's handwriting, Ryan and Andy complete a story.

Ryan has many false starts. He doesn't latch onto available opportunties for story lines--no more hot rod stories, nor stories about his Korean sister. Instead he finds it necessary to keep a constant watch over our plants, the class science projects. June comes and Ryan is still wandering around, watering our plants, sharpening pencils, and he has the neatest, cleaniest cubbie in the first grade.

TONY: A DECRIPTION OF A STARTER, STARTER, STARTER...

Up until November Tony had written one simple story about his house. Then in December he wrote:

TONY'S DRAFT	CORRECTED VERSION
the sch p i g i of. the space ship is blasting off the the it s-ip umt tms rs. the sa-ip at tn--.	The spaceship is going off. The spaceship is blasting off. The spaceship is almost to Mars. The spaceship is at Mars.

Here he has some beginning sounds and has included lines where he feels that letters/words have been ommitted. During January Tony starts many stories. While sitting with me at a conference he says, "Ican't draw a house. Do it for me." With that he tears up his paper (without anger), throws it away, gets a few more sheets, sits down, and watches other children in the room. Tony feels that whatever he does isn't good enough.

"Why did you throw that away?" askes Suzanne.

"It's no good. It didn't look right."

"You always throw away your work!" replies Eric.

There's no answer from Tony.

January ends with Tony producing this story:

TONY'S DRAFT	CORRECTED VERSION
Fot iz nad the man hat pl on to fod! Fod iz not lon! Fod iz ulon bik ran uyan. Fot iz not ulon kid km bon!	Frosty is made. The man's hat blew onto Frosty. Frosty is not alone! Frosty is alone because the people ran away. Frosty is not alone. The kid came by.

In February parents come to school for report card conferences. Tony's mom talks about his Frosty story, "If he is shown what to write down, then he can write." She feels that perhaps the T.V. movie gave Tony the steps for his story.

Tony began to write with various boys in our class. He wrote with Michael three times in February and again in April. He worked with Jeff in February and in March and produced a total of three stories. Eric was included as an author once. In spite of my many efforts, he remained dependent on others in order to complete stories.

CHRISSY: A DESCRIPTION OF A SPURTER

Due to Chrissy's many absences, she didn't get around to publishing until February. She and Jenny wrote:

CHRISSY'S DRAFT	CORRECTED VERSION
We lick hasis. We luck at ahasis We lick Chrismus tres at chrismistes times! We lick pupl. We re at a brthday.	We like houses. We looked at a house. We like Christmas trees at Christmas time! We like people. We are at a birthday party.

After this publication, she attempted some stories alone, but never brought them to completion. In April Chrissy's stories seem to be taking on more details, but her invented spelling is still being hindered by her speech difficulties. By June she starts to produce stories with words covering the page--written all by herself:

CHRISSY'S DRAFT	CORRECTED VERSION
One day I wus at mi fend hese and my butt cam runing and he tod me that mi dad is biging home a cat f a wek.	One day I was at my friend's house and my brother came running and he told me that my dad is
Sum cids fam the cat in a gobish the cat wus a fust body. His ese wus not oping and his ess wusit. My dad is the pisubl He got to biging	bringing home a cat for a week. Some kids found the cat in the garbage. The cat was a fuzzball. His eyes were not open and his
him hom fust. Now his ese were oping and his ese wer oping to. his neme is tigr it is a boy it is so verrl little On monday he hst too.	ears weren't. My dad is the principal. He got to bring him home first. Now his eyes were opening and his ears were opening,
to go backe to my dad soolle he mit com bake wan he tot bigr he is going in the fur for a wawe. The and.	His name is Tiger. It is a boy. It is so very little. On Monday, he has to go back to my dad's school. He might come back when he gets bigger. He is going to a farm for a while. The end.

Chrissy is exploding all on her own in June. These last stories are filled with rich details and are very alive for her.

The school year is drawing to a close. Looking back over the past few years, I see some patterns that develop in children's writing:

WRITING DEVELOPMENT TAKES TIME. Children need consistent opportunities to deal with their writing development. My students were given 45 minutes at the beginning of each school day. This consistent time frame allowed each writer to wander, think, draft, discuss, revise, draw. It provided the necessary "room" for them to grow. Although as a teacher I often wished I could "make" them move ahead, fortunately I realize that I can guide them, but I can't force their writing development. It comes at its own pace for each student.

WRITING DEVELOPMENT SHOULDN'T BE JUDGED PREMATURELY. When a child is developing skills, he or she doesn't acquire them at an even pace. Growth comes in bits and pieces. If I try to measure growth just by the quantity of what is produced, I would conclude that all children don't move ahead. However, quantity, quality, and time to grow, all play important parts in the writing development of first graders.

FIRST GRADE STUDENTS WHO AVOID WRITING WILL DEVELOP OTHER STRATEGIES. Like Tony, Ryan, and Chrissy, students will search out other means that will allow them to succeed during writing. Ryan wandered around giving himself time between his successful writing pieces. Tony was a non-finisher on his own, but when given the opportunity to write with other children, he became a partner of writing. Their paths to a finished piece were not as direct as many children, yet they continued to grow, contributing to our community of classroom writers.

COLLABORATION WITH ANOTHER STUDENT AIDES WRITING DEVELOPMENT FOR BOTH PARTNERS. By writing with one another, the children have a common goal between the two of them. Collabration pulls on the strengths of both partners, allowing the non-writer to participate more fully than if he were working in solitude. Often it is the non-writer who can "hear" a weakness in a piece. Thus the more competent writer gains additional insight to his/her written work. The writing development is fostered for each.

Science Time or is it Writing Time?

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2-100

Science Time, or is it Writing Time?

"Can we put out our bean plants?" asked Denise.
"They've grown so much!"
"We can put our experiments out, too!"
"What about our bean stories?"
"I want to use my rainbow story, and put up a
ROY G BIV sign."

This kind of enthusiasm is usually heard at Science Fair time because there are so many hands on activities waiting to be displayed on this special parent night. Science is exciting for first graders. This paper is an attempt to explain how the children taught me to integrate science and creative writing. I had not planned for the children to write about their plants. No one even thought about science at writing time, nor writing at science time. This unit of writing truly "just evolved from the children." If I had "planned it", it wouldn't have had the impact that it did--both for the children and for me. Writing, did indeed, lead us to discover more about what we knew--a digging deeper.

It all began about a month ago when we had "Planting Day". Alas, soil was all over, on our clothes, on the rug, with a bit more in plastic pots!

"Can we each have our own pot--I don't wanna share," shouted Shuana "and I wanna plant lots of seeds," she continued. (Shuana isn't timid.)

I answered her by giving class directions:

> First, everyone should scoop up some soil into your own pot. Mrs. Miller and I will help if you need us. Everyone will get at least 3 seeds to gently place against the inside of your pot--like this. By doing this you will be able to see through your pot, and watch your seeds grow. Next you will add more soil on top of your seeds. I will show you over at the sink, the proper way of watering your seeds. Last, you will take your finished pot over to Mrs. Miller at the window sill. She'll help you label it.

The pots began their vigil of sitting, and eyes began to stare.

"Will they grow today?" Denise asked Robbie.
"Sure. Remember Jack and the Bean Stalk!"
"But that wasn't real," she snapped back.
"Was it Mrs. Pekala?"

2-101

That is what started our discussion of reality verses fiction. Still, the next morning the children raced into the classroom--their eyes stared at the sitting pots:

> "Nothings happening!"
> "Maybe we should water them again."
> "What's wrong?"
> "Giv'em some time," boldy declared Narendra.
> "Maybe when the sunshines later they'll grow!"
> "Can we write about our beans?
> I'll call mine Super Beans 'cause I know
> mine'll be the biggest in the class,"
> boasted Jason!

The children were so involved that I found it difficult to interupt their enthusiam about these plants. Some kids just sat down and started to write make-believe stories involving their plants. During their writing I encouraged the children to use their imaginations rather than just elaborate on the chain of events that had taken place.

Deanna sat by herself to write. "The soil is like a warm blanket," she whispered as she drew a picture. Energetic Karyn had lots of action in her story--"my seeds will have a party under there!"

That was the beginning of our bean stories. Through their writing the children gained knowledge and a better understanding of science. "Do plants sleep like us? I want my plant to grow the best, like in my story, but how big will it get? What'll happen if my doesn't grow?" Narendra and Michael decided to check in the library for books about beans. "Maybe a book can tell us how to make them grow faster!" The class began to talk about experimenting. "What happens when we don't set a pot of seeds in the light?"

These first graders took a shared experience, wrote about it by expanding upon it in their own way, then discussed and learned even more about that experience. Their finished stories were as diverse and the children themselves. Among them were these stories:

THE TEA PARTY by Amanda

I feel wet in here. I'm having a tea party.
I see other beans. I'm having a shower. I like
it down here. The end.

THE BEAN by Vikas

There was a boy. He found me. He wanted to
plant me. He did not give me any water! I grew
even if I didn't have any water. Now, I'm dead.

2-102

THE BEANS THAT TURNED INTO PEOPLE by Michael

The beans turned into people. We had a party. We had fun inside the pot. We grew up big. We jumped out of the pot! Now our class has 23 people. Our class was happy!

THE BEAN IN SPACE by Narendra

There was a bean in the soil. It was dark. The bean thought it was space. It saw the moon and stars. It started to rain. The bean thought it was space rain! The bean got an umbrella and put it on top of its head. The bean started to grow. The bean started to get taller and taller everyday. It got so tall that it went into space.

The bean saw the moon and stars. It started to touch the moon. On top of the moon, it saw a seed. The seed started to grow and this seed was called a moon seed. The bean started to die! Then the moon seed started to grow so much.

The moon seed started to touch Mars and it started to rain. The moon seed thought it was Mars rain! The moon seed started to die and the Mars seed started to grow. The Mars seed stayed on Mars.

As the days pasted, the eyes stared and the pots sat. Jason's story of having the biggest plant didn't turn out that way in reality. None the less, most seeds grew into very tall plants. Many had to be staked to keep them from falling over!

This science unit wasn't set up as a story starter! It wasn't to be used in creative writing at all. However, the students' ideas WERE worthy of creative writing time! It was the children that took this concrete, hands-on activity, and integrated it into our creative writing curriculum. This was not the end--these children don't see subjects in school as isolated areas of the curriculum:

"Can we take our plants home after the Science Fair?"

"My mother wants my plant story; do I have to keep it here?"

"I'm writing chapter 2 for my bean story. Its going into outer space!"

"Can we learn about dinosaurs next? I've got lots of stuff at home that
I could share with the class. I know the library has lots of books, and
Dino is a great name, and . . .

Using Journals to Encourage the Writing Processes of Second Graders

Jack Schwartz
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"OK, everybody. Journal writing time."

Matt and Kevin K. shout, "Yeah!" There are a couple of "Alrights!" and the children quickly get up from their seats. There is a flurry of excitement and movement as marble composition books are taken from cubbies. Pretty soon we are spread out in all parts of the room, in all positions. It takes a while for things to settle down. A lot of warm-up activity is going on. Chris is sharpening his pencil and looking around for a cozy writing place. Dina decides to number all the pages of her journal, then, when that important job is complete, she starts searching for something she likes. She examines an earlier, uncompleted story about her dog and rereads it. Then she starts writing. Michele and Meryl are chatting away about something that happened after school. It takes about 10 minutes before things grow quiet. It is never totally quiet, mind you. Matt and Kevin K. are under the loft, making noises. "Varoom, boom, boom!"

"Yeah, Matt, that sounds pretty good."

"OK, but how do you spell varoom?"

Erika asks Kirsten to listen to her story to see what she thinks.

"Sure, I'll listen to your story, Erika," Kirsten answers, "Just as long as it's not that 15-page Halloween one again."

Michele and Meryl are up in the loft. I think they're talking about boys. They are certainly not writing. "Come on, girls, please try to work on your journal stories."

"Mr. Schwartz, can I read this poem to you?"

"Sure, Maryellen." I listen. "That was great!"

"My mouse wrote it."

"No, Maryellen, I don't believe your mouse wrote that one."

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"See how small the writing is?"

"I don't care how small the writing is. I'll believe your mouse wrote it when your mouse can read it to me."

Journal writing in the curriculum

As educators we are constantly evaluating our objectives while we encourage children to compose in the classroom. With second graders, as with all children, the goals are many and complex. We want children to be fluent and confident. We want to improve their ability to write a coherent, sequentially valid story. A positive attitude is of utmost importance. A story might have some humor, an interesting beginning, an unusual ending, a clever story line. Sometimes, with some children, we are happy if there is any story line. And, of course, there are other important objectives to consider—spelling, handwriting, and grammar.

Not everybody agrees on how to teach composition, grammar, and spelling. But there is one thing all teachers should agree on: young children can write and should be given as many opportunities as possible to express themselves in writing. Yet, to classroom teachers, teaching writing entails a tremendous investment in time and energy. We wonder how to create interesting topics that will motivate good writing. We feel obliged to read, correct, and comment on papers. Often there is conferencing and then the rewriting process. Where in our very busy day can we find enough time to do all this?

Journal writing is my answer to this dilemma. Because of the structure of this writing activity, there are no papers for the teacher to correct, conferencing is not essential, and motivation is seldom a problem. Proper spelling, grammar, punctuation, good handwriting, and a well-presented paper, are important to the author, but, as we shall see, for reasons that are different from those in most traditional writing settings.

Defining a journal is the first order of business. Different people variously define journals. Some people believe journals should be reflections of life or the recordings of events. I set guidelines as wide as possible; I define the children's journals as places for them to write about anything they please. Something from their lives such as a trip or a visit might make a good story, but something silly like a joke or an impossible or improbable adventure is fine, too. Talking rabbits and vacations to the moon are just as valid as Disneyland and after-school parties. I introduce journal writing to the children by reading a selection from my own Peace Corps diary (any personal diary or journal will do).

The journals are private. I will not write in them, collect them, correct them, or force students to read them. Second graders immediately see the advantages of all this: "Nobody else can look?"; "Write about anything, even silly stuff?"; "Spelling doesn't count?" Off they go to their assigned "private writing places," and they write, and write, and write.

Getting into writing

There is a lot of prattle going on in the art area. I look over and see Meryl and Michele. They don't seem to be doing anything remotely related to writing.

"Meryl! Michele! Please sit apart from each other."

Jason and Kevin C. sit together working on illustrations for their stories. Jason has some sort of weird spaceman in his book, and Kevin is coloring in his sketch of Perseus for his "Clash of the Titans" story. Jamie S. comes over and asks Kevin how to spell "coconut tree." Kevin is not sure, so they sound it out together.

Cathy works at the back table, reading aloud to herself. Her piece is about the night her brother was born. She really loves him.

A pair of blue sneakers, attached to legs, hangs out from between the railings of the loft. I have to walk over to see to whom they belong.

2-105

"Whatcha doing, Vinnie?"

"Mr. Schwartz, who's the right wing for the Islanders? I can't remember his name, and he just scored a goal in my story."

"I don't know, Vin. Go down to Mr. Heilbrun's room and ask him. Don't get lost."

"Hey, Vinnie!" Billy looks up to the loft and shouts, "I have a hockey story, too. It's got a commercial in it."

A few more minutes and things suddenly become quiet. All students are involved in their writing. I look around, and when it appears nobody needs help I sneak over to my desk and take out my own journal. I try to add to my story, "Ride through Devil's Canyon"; I've been working on it for over a month, and at this rate will never get it finished. Kristen comes over to me as I sit and interrupts me mid-thought.

"I want you to read this story about a dream," she says. "Is it OK?"

"Sure, Kristen. Let's see it. Hey, this is pretty good. Read it to some of your classmates, and see what they say." I start to write again.

Activity

The structure of journal writing time is uncomplicated. For about 25 minutes, three times a week, children write at private areas around the room. As the year progresses, they are encouraged to collaborate and form two- or three-person writing groups. They seem to do this very naturally, and they often try to help revise each other's work. It is satisfying that they are helping each other without being told.

During this writing time, children come over and ask my opinion. I usually do not offer many concrete suggestions—just a lot of encouragement. I try to allow students to work out problems by themselves or with friends. In my classroom, journal writing is a relaxed, nonpressured activity. I emphasize producing stories that classmates will enjoy.

Journal writing also involves rereading and editing. The children have been taught to look for parts of their writing that do not make sense or need more detail. The students take this step very seriously. They know they will face the toughest audience of all, their peers, for whom they very much want to write well and read clearly.

The last part of the journal period, reading time, takes about 25 minutes. Although second graders all want to read, this would obviously take too long. What seems to work well is dividing them into groups of 10 or so and allowing only one group to read to the class each time. This not only makes reading period more manageable; it also gives children a couple of writing sessions between each reading turn.

During the journal reading time, I model several skills for listening and responding. However, perhaps the most important function I have during the reading time is assuring that every author is respected by the class. I discourage put-downs and make sure that the author has the full attention of the group before proceeding.

Two main themes

From the beginning of the school year, I try to emphasize two major themes with my young writers. The first is the pleasure the author derives from writing, and the second is the sense of audience. I tell my students that one way an author derives pleasure is by the power he holds over the story. An author can do anything within the context of the story. The author controls the action—scary endings, happy endings, funny endings, or sad endings. For many children who have very little control over their daily lives, this developing sense of power becomes a prime motivation in their journal writing.

An important part of my strategy is demonstrating that I like to write. I believe this has a very strong influence on the children. Not only do I read from my own journal, but I also bring in newsletter arti-

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cles, letters to friends, poetry, or stories I have written for other occasions. The work I read to students need not be particularly good or even appropriate to their level. The idea is to give the children the feeling that this is an activity I relish and believe is important, one I do for pleasure.

Through the reading time, I am able to address my second major theme in writing, the sense of audience. By this I mean that the child should be aware that in most cases the author is not the primary audience of a story. Children learn both to perform in front of and be part of an audience. Many second graders have not had the opportunity to read their work to an audience or to be part of a listening audience. Journals become an important vehicle for learning to consider the listener or reader. Since children are encouraged to read uncompleted work, they are interacting with their peers and teacher at a time when they are most willing to make revisions and acknowledge inconsistencies or add missing details critical to the meaning of the story.

As authors and storytellers, the children must be taught to project and read with expression. As mentioned earlier, spelling and neatness are not forced on the children but become important later on. The need for clarity of handwriting and accurate spelling becomes clear as the child tries to wade through a great story that is not coming across to the class because it is too poorly written for even the author to read. Children want to do well and will respond positively to individual conferences on organizing a paper, writing on lines, skipping lines, putting spaces between words and trying harder to sound out words. Journals give a sense of meaning to these skills.

Journal reading time also offers the opportunity for the teacher to model different ways to respond to writing. We start at the beginning of the year with positive comments: "Tell Billy some of the things you liked best about his story," or "What would you like to hear more about?" As we get to know each other and gain trust, we ask additional questions about the content: "What did you mean when you said, 'One day I was on Mars'? How did you get there?" or "I didn't understand the part when you were in the video game machine. What happened?" I might ask children if they know where their stories are going—that is, if they have thought about an ending. Someone might suggest an idea for improving a story. Additional ideas are given only as suggestions and are often not very good suggestions at that. Fortunately, they are frequently rejected by the author. However, the children are learning to operate in a writing group. They are learning how to be sensitive, good listeners and how to help each other. The impact of the modeling done here can be readily seen when children collaborate with each other during the writing times.

Surprises and doubts

When students enjoy writing and write regularly, they surprise themselves and their teachers. During one journal reading period Erika asked if she could read her home journal. I did not know she kept a journal at home and asked her to read. She rendered a very accurate version of *The Wizard of Oz*. It was obviously not copied but written with all the enthusiasm and detail of the movie, including some very imaginative dialogue. She was quite proud.

When the class finished applauding, as they tended to do after each person read, I asked Erika some questions. To me the objective of these questions was to make the children aware of the possibility of writing for pleasure at home, but suddenly several students declared they also had home journals. Liz said, "I just started a diary. It's different from my journal. It is going to tell what I do every day." Matt said with indignation, "I have one at home, too. I'm gonna bring it in!" Some children did bring in their home journals and shared the stories.

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One day I noted that many children had very good opening lines to their stories: "Snowflakes falling on the fresh evening snow . . ."; "One bright and sunny day . . ."; "Once upon a time there was an apple with a worm in it." At the end of the reading period I pointed out some of the good beginnings and asked for a few to be reread. I then asked students to look through their journals for opening lines they thought were particularly good, and we had fun reading them.

At one point near the end of the year the children read their stories, and as I listened I realized that they seemed to have reached new levels of writing. The length and quality of the stories were very different from those done in January. The characters had character. The plots were more intricate and coherent.

There appeared a need to teach the use of quotation marks because the dialogue had become complex and some of the children pointed out that they were confused. There were several students who allowed their stories to be used as examples of "difficult-to-understand" dialogue. Later that week, after several directed grammar lessons on quotation marks and dialogue, I found that students were frequently using quotation marks in the journal entries. The children did not have to use quotations in the journals, but most chose to use them, and it was easy to see who had mastered the concept and who needed more help.

At this point it is worth adding a word of caution. Teachers will find that children's journals become a continuous and rich source of teaching material. It is tempting to look at misspellings or poor punctuation and try to correct those or use them on spelling lists. There is a fine line between occasionally using the journals to motivate study in relevant areas such as quotation marks and regularly using them to remediate spelling and punctuation. It is my view that the latter is not a very good use of journals because it tends to allow children to associate their books with tedious work and shifts the emphasis away from the content of the stories.

Of course, teachers can use journals to help reach other goals, such as evaluating a spelling program. If teachers see many words spelled incorrectly in journals—words that have appeared on spelling tests and were correct—it forces us to evaluate the effectiveness of traditional spelling programs. A journal is also a compact collection of a child's writing throughout the year, and it is easy to trace growth in many areas of writing.

Twice a year the children have an opportunity to publish an anthology called *The Best of Our Journals*. It is during these times that I teach editing and proofreading skills. Students choose the story they believe is the best (seldom the same story I would have chosen), and they work with a small writing group to produce a second rough draft. This they shape into a perfectly spelled and grammatically correct piece of work.

No activity is absolutely perfect, and the journal writing program has raised some problems I have had to deal with over the years. For example, as anyone who has worked with second graders knows, they love to make gross statements of the poorest taste. Toilet talk runs rampant at certain times of the year. I often wonder at what point I should stop being tolerant. Another issue has been that of copying from books. Many children like to do this, and I have decided it is permissible, since we learn so much from examples in literature. I do, however, try to encourage the children to make their next works original. This year the use of pictures to illustrate stories in the journals has, for a few children, taken up an overwhelming amount of their writing time. How should this be dealt with? Many of the problems seem to solve themselves with a little time. For each class, the problems—and for each teacher, the solutions—will differ. The important thing to remember is that it is the atmosphere in the classroom that will determine the success of this activity.

Journal writing is an excellent activity for a number of reasons. Perhaps most important, it takes the entire writing process into account. It recognizes that children, like adults, need certain conditions met before they feel truly free to express themselves on paper. They need time to plan and work things over. They need space not only to work but also to move around. They need support from the teacher and from their peers.

False impressions

I have been writing at my desk for about 10 minutes, laboring over the wording of "Devil's Canyon" when it occurs to me that the room is very quiet. Too quiet. Where are Michele and Meryl? I get up and look in the hall.

"Michele, Meryl, what are you guys doing? This is supposed to be a private time. You can't possibly do a good job on your writing unless you concentrate. So, unless you are discussing your stories, I would like you in your seats." I look up at the clock and announce to the class, "Let's all get in our seats, please. It's time to hear some of our stories."

After proofreading the day's entries, we listen as about half the class read to the group. Jeffrey goes first and reads about his stitches. We wince as he describes how the doctor's needle went through his head. Jason reads some jokes to the class. I don't understand them, but everybody else is rolling on the floor. Mio reads a long story about her grandmother's visit last month from Japan. She has detail after detail of the time they spent together. Kristen reads a story called "Butterfly Mountain," and Liz asks, "Why don't you tell how beautiful the butterflies are? Use colors." Matt wants to know, "Did you use quotation marks?" Pac-Man stories and Smurf stories are big this year, and they come complete with songs and sound effects.

Two more hands go up. Michele and Meryl want to read. Michele asks if they can read a story together. I am not sure what she means, but reluctantly I agree. I don't really think they could have anything to share.

MICHELE: 589-4890 Dingalingaling. Hi, Meryl. What's up?
MERYL: Oh hi, Michele. Nothing really.
MICHELE: Oh well, can you come over and play with me?
MERYL: OK.
MICHELE: Do you think you can sleep over tonight?
MERYL: My mom said it is alright. I'll be right over.
MICHELE: Wait a second. Don't forget your underwear. Bye.
MERYL: Ding dong. Ding dong.
MICHELE: It's the door bell. I'll get it. Hi, Meryl. You're just in time for dinner.
MERYL: O goody. What's for supper?
MICHELE: Pepperoni pizza.
MERYL: Pepperoni pizza! Great. It's my favorite. . . .

And on and on they go. I am amazed.

The children comment on the stories. Erika says, "Well, I really liked it, but, Michele, right after you said 'Bye' you said 'Ding dong.' Did you live next door or something? I think that happened too fast."

Jason answers for Michele. "Time passed. That's all."

I'm not really listening. When did they find the time to work on all of that, I wonder. And I thought they were just jabbering.

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TALE OF A 4TH GRADE CASE STUDY

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The month was September, the year 1981. I had volunteered to take part in a writing research project directed by Sondra Perl, a director of New York City Writing Project who had worked closely with teachers in our district for several years. Sondra and two other researchers were going to study how 10 teachers in grades 1-12 taught writing and we, the teachers, were each to study the writing development of one child. In my memory, Sondra's voice took on a note of authority: "You will write a case study" she intoned. "You will need to find a child who interests you and observe him or her. You will need to collect data, perhaps saving every piece of writing the child does, tape interviews with the child and finally write up what you are seeing in an attempt to make sense of it. My hope is that you will all go on to publish your case studies."

I was impressed. This was an important assignment in the writing project in which I was involved. Already I had a child in mind who loved to write. As a 4th grade teacher, I knew that not every child is prolific and that some children are more enthusiastic about writing than others. The choice of case study would be easy. I would pick Todd, a very bright child, an excellent reader, and an avid writer. How simple I thought. Now all I have to do is collect data through the year.

I devised a plan of saving all the writing the children did. All of my students kept writing folders into which every bit of their writing was placed. They also had journals in which they wrote anything they wished. The writing journals were kept in their desks for easy access. I could conveniently locate drafts, revisions and journal writing any time I wanted and the finished edited pieces would be published in our 4th grade oaktag book, held together by three big rings.

Besides selecting a student, I found getting an official O.K. from Todd's parents equally impressive. Todd's mother readily agreed. In fact she was excited that her son was wanted for this purpose and seemed flattered that he had been chosen.

Meanwhile, at our regular Tuesday classes, the nine other teachers were finding difficulty in choosing the right case study. I sat back smug and secure. Why did some people have such difficulty making up their minds?

I had begun keeping a journal on Todd. This, I knew, would be necessary to refer back to when I finally reached the point of formulating a theory about Todd's writing and publishing my "research." Of course that day was far in the future and meanwhile writing in the journal was fun.

Todd was an interesting child to write about. Todd had problems. He had trouble relating to other children. He solved his problems by punching.

Todd, the writer, had much violence in his stories. One of his first pieces was FOURTH GRADE VERSUS THE TEACHER. In it the kids bombed, maimed and killed all the teachers. The children in the class were quite excited over it and properly impressed by Todd's nerve in writing and sharing such a piece. Todd was gleeful with his success.

I was elated with the pattern I thought I saw. "Look for patterns," Sondra had said at our last class. "As you begin to observe your case study carefully, patterns will begin to emerge." Well, here it was, the early part of October and already I was discovering patterns! There was a link , I felt sure, between the violence in Todd's writing and the violent way he solved his problems.

Now it would just be a matter of time before all this would be clear to me and I could come up with a theory! I modestly pictured myself unearthing a new and as yet undocumented idea in the study of writing. Todd would show me----. Of course I must get some interviews on tape. These interviews would open still another door, shedding more light on the pattern which was forming.

I set up a time for the interview with Todd. My two questions were "Where do you get your ideas?" and "How do you decide what to write about?" I felt that these two clever questions would set the stage to my getting insights into the violence he was expressing in his words and perhaps also in his dealings with peers. We sat down without a tape recorder since I didn't want it to inhibit Todd. I was prepared to write fast.

Todd was serious and thoughtful when I asked the question, "Where do you get your ideas?" He took several deep breaths and didn't look at me directly as he answered. "When I play, I think about things. I think about people, kids in the class and action. When I'm in a certain kind of mood, I think of certain kinds of action, I watch T.V. and get an idea for a story."

"Can you give me an example of a story you wrote from watching T.V.?" I asked. "Well, I wrote 240 ROBERT, and that was from a T.V. show." "Violence, aha!" I thought to myself. "What I wrote has parts from a few of these shows," Todd explained. "How do you decide what parts to choose to write about?" "Well, I pick parts that would fit together." What do you mean "fit together?" "I picked out parts I liked that could all fit tegether into one story."

Todd explained how particular scenes, the helicopter scene, the chase, the ending, all came from different episodes. Each scene was exciting and violent. 240 Robert is an example of this technique:

240 ROBERT

> One day John took his Kawasaki and put it in his shed. When he came back it was upside down. He turned it around and took a ride. Kevin was patrolling in his hellicopter. He saw John's tire loose. He swooped down and lifted John from his motorcycle. It went off the cliff and exploded due to its fall. "Thanks Kevin", John said as he lifted himself into the cockpit. "Don't thank me yet. Somebody loosened your tire."
>
> "It was the Hit and Run Bandit."
>
> "Oh gosh, I really could have been killed."
>
> "Beep! Beep!"
>
> "It's the warning lights! Somebody is trying to kill us."
>
> "Look, he's got a shot gun" yelled John.
>
> "240 Robert, 240 Robert! Man with shot gun. 42 Manson Rd."
>
> "That's us, said Matt.

"You bet," said I.

We raced to Manson Rd. "There he is" we said. "So it's the hit and run bandit I took my pistol, and so did Matt. Mike jumped out of the back. He shot but missed. "Shoot, I almost had him, said Mike. Matt, Mike, and I jumped out of our hiding spaces and ran after him. Matt jumped on him and I hand cuffed him. "So it's the Hit and Run Bandit. We've been looking for you for years."

"Yeah, but I'll be free soon."

"Ouch!"

Someone hit Mike over the head. Matt turned around and shot him in the leg. He fell to the ground. I put the Bandit in the truck while Matt called the ambulance. When the ambulance got there they put the man in the back. The bandit was mad. "You'll pay for this!" When we got to our station we got another call. "240 Robert, 240 Robert. Hit and Run Bandit escaped.

"Boy, they sure take care of those criminals", I said.

"You bet," said Matt.

"Right," said I.

"So we'll search the prison area."

We saw the bandit running away so I skidded the truck around and chased him. He stopped at a corner. I said to Matt, "Take the wheel." I jumped out of the window and pulled him to the ground.

"All right, Bandit, these are your final criminal days."

"Don't count on it. I'll be back." This time to kill."

So we took him to jail.

"Oh boy, I wouldn't be surprised if he escaped again."

"Neither would I," said Matt.

We drove back to our station.

"Hey guys, anything happening?" Asked Kevin. Matt and I laughed. But at that moment a black hooded figure threw a smoke bomb. I ran to get him.. Matt followed. "He's got a gun!" yelled Kevin. I kicked the gun out of his hand and jumped on him. Kevin took him to court. We went back to our paper work.

The hooded man was the Bandit's partner.

By Todd

We discussed why he chose to do so many action stories. He replied that most of the boys in the class write action stories and he wanted to be like them, to write like them. He complained about Sharon copying an idea he had. He had been angry at the time. I suggested that maybe it was a compliment to be copied. He looked thoughtful and smiled. (I don't know what he was actually thinking.)

Afterwards I looked over my rapidly written notes. I saw a child who wrote of violence, but so did every boy in the class. I saw a child who got ideas from T.V., nothing unusual about that, many children did. I saw a child who took bits and pieces from different sources and fit them together according to his mood. Perhaps this was what made Todd's writing unique and gave it a quality of vigor which set it apart from other children's pieces. I also saw a child who had so much invested in his writing that he became angry and upset when somebody else used his ideas. What was happening to my pattern? I didn't see it as clearly as before.

My writing class of 10 teachers and three researchers continued to meet every Tuesday afternoon to write and to discuss the teaching of writing and children's development as writers. I felt a commitment to this project and was ready to do my share. The case study I was embarking on would be my contribution. A feeling of responsibility was beginning to assert itself.

I started reading examples of case studies that Sondra brought to class. I discovered they came in all kinds of formats. Some went in depth over one tiny point and were quite scientific. Others covered lots of territory and seemed rambling. Some were interesting, some were dull. Some presented a problem, some presented facts, some just told about an incident. I noticed one thing though, they all wound up with a snappy conclusion or solution. They all proved something!

Todd, unaware of my confusion, continued to write his action packed, trendy pieces and to read them at sharing time to a rapt audience of his peers. His motorcycle stories shifted to Star Wars and outer space pieces. He filled his pages with battles, space craft and weapons of destruction and each scene was read aloud with all the appropriate sound effects. The result was a production of terse action, colorful characters and multiple sounds which every child was eager to emulate.

Suddenly a new insight struck me. Of course, why hadn't I thought of this before! It was so obvious! Todd had found a way to relate to his peers through his writing! Didn't they praise his stories? Didn't they announce to visitors that Todd was the best writer in the class? Didn't they applaud when he shared his pieces? The answer to each of these questions was "yes"! Here was my theory! Now all I had to do was observe Todd's relationship with his peers now that he was enjoying acclaim as a writer.

The researchers suggested we broaden our focus to include information about how our case study child acts as a total child-not just as a writing child. I should observe Todd in a number of different situations. Then I would have a more complete picture to draw upon.

I would watch carefully how he interacted with his classmates during recess and noontime, those periods which are free of classroom structure and where children's true feelings and actions are more obvious.

My casual surveillance of Todd's playground behavior showed that he either played with his little cars by himself or with one other child. Sometimes he joined in whatever game was in season-football, soccer or softball. Several times arguments had occured but they were of the everyday type and were usually settled in minutes. There had been one incident in September where Todd punched a second grader in the eye and blackened it. A meeting with the principal resulted in the warning that if punching occurred one more time he would lose his playground privileges. This had been an effective deterrent but I was sure the writing of violent stories had also helped to siphon off his hostility. Hadn't things been going well, right up through December? I began to think of other children who might benefit from "Writing Therapy." So far my careful observations had revealed a boy who did play games, who argued, who sometimes quit when things didn't go his way but who was not reverting to punching. This fit right into my theory. Let the violence come out in writing and it recedes in real life situations. I wondered if I should tell the school psychologist about my finding. Perhaps I would wait until I had made more recess and noontime observations. It was important that his case study be done scientifically!

And then it happened! Two of my quiet, well behaved girls, Maureen and Christine, dashed up to me at noontime and announced dramatically that Todd had punched each of them in the face. I asked Todd and the two girls to come out in the hall so we could find out what happened. Todd said the two girls had pushed him and he hadn't punched them hard. With Christine he said he just pushed on her glasses; Maureen, he gently punched on her nose. He said they were teasing him. During the discussion Todd said he had to get even! We talked about better ways of dealing with teasing and superficially settled the immediate problem but that phrase stuck in my mind and explained so much of Todd's attitude. Everytime someone did something to him he felt compelled to do something to get even.

How did this incident fit in with my theory? He hadn't punched them very hard.

At our weekly writing classes I began to express a few doubts about my case study plan. Was I doing all that I should? Was I laying the proper groundwork? Was enough data being gathered? Sondra once again encouraged me with assurances that much observation, in-depth interviews at intervals of two months and a complete collection of the child's work would amply reward me with an emerging pattern. "There are any number of things that will come out," she said. "Meet with your case study. "Look at him very very carefully." And then she told of the time when she was an art major in college and had looked at the same work of art for 6 hours as part of an assignment. "You'd be surprised," she smiled, "at what you can discover by looking at a painting for 6 hours!"

Fortified by this example of dedication, I resumed my vigil. I watched Todd in the process of writing. He was grinning as he sharpened his pencil. He was thinking about what he was going to write. Now he had begun writing. His musical instrument case covered the front of his desk. His pencil was moving over the page and his concentration was intense. There was a brief squabble over a pencil and Todd magnanimously gave in and relinquished his extra pencil to Sharon. Kevin said, "That was a nice thing to do, Todd." Todd smiled and shrugged. His mind was far away and he continued to write earnestly. He erased sometimes and bit

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his pencil. Occasionally he pulled it back and forth in his mouth as he was thinking. This day we had visitors in the room but Todd seemed not to notice. If I had some question about my theory, it was crystal clear where my energy should go. I would collect, interview, scrutinize.

By April Todd had written over 20 pieces, four of which he had chosen to publish in our big book.

240 ROBERT
TOM THE RACER
RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK
PAC MAN

Every single piece contained action, violence, drama I had logged over 50 pages of anecdotes and incidents from my observations of Todd in all his school related activities and faithfully recorded them in my case study journal. I had interviewed Todd three times, discussed his writing with him and even had him compose aloud on tape. In addition, he had been audio and video taped sharing his stories aloud to the class.

What else could I do? And then it occured to me to try something different, something Todd had never done before and which would bring his emotions out in the open. I would ask him to write about his feelings! I knew that Todd had difficulty writing on an assigned topic. His social studies reports had been hastily and sketchily done. His science experiment write ups had been a disaster. But to be asked to write about feelings would be different. Todd was bursting with all kinds of feelings just waiting to be expressed. What an opportunity for Todd to express anger and hostility in a constructive way. What a chance to relieve his frustrations. Why, he might never feel the need to hit or punch another child!

Once again it seemed such a logical thing to do I wondered why it had taken me so long to come up with it.

I set up this interview in a quiet room, taking care that a DO NOT DISTURB sign was placed in the window of the door.

We set up the tape recorder which by now was accepted by both Todd and me as being nonintrusive.

And then I began brightly, "Todd, I'm going to ask you to do some writing that is a little bit different from what you wrote about before. I'm going to ask you to write about your feelings!"

There was no answering smile. In fact a light suddenly went off in Todd's eyes and he looked at me blankly. Even when I talked about the good thing which had happened that day, that Todd had been included in the big "boys table," which they had made by pushing their desks together, he did not respond. He sunk down lower in his chair and the more I coaxed and encouraged, the more gloomy and dismayed he became. Time ticked slowly by. I waited, finally Todd whispered, "I can't do it". I thought maybe he could conjure up some bad feelings if the good ones didn't stir him to write. I asked, "Have some bad things happened that you could write about?" A long pause, a sigh and a tremulous "No" convinced me that Todd was not going to write about his feelings. He wasn't going to talk about his feelings either. We ended the session talking about Todd's experiment with solar heat and other more neutral subjects.

So much for getting an inside look at Todd's emotions through his writing! I could see tht my approach had been naive and clumsy and that I was not a psychologist. I still had my theory that there was a connection between Todd's violence expressed in his stories and Todd's ability to control his violent impulses in school.

In my writing research class, talk about case studies had increased. I had done all that was required as far as the preliminary ground work was concerned, but now what? "Explore the wider context," Sondra suggested. A wider context for Todd would include parents. An interview with his mother! She would have many things to tell about how Todd sees himself within the family. I set up a meeting with her the very next week.

Todd's mother was a conscientious, worrying-type with wispy hair and a sympathetic manner. Todd walked in with his younger sister who was about three years old. After they left for the playground, I asked Mother how Todd got along with his sister. "Oh, he just loves her," she replied. "He so patient with her. I'm amazed how patient he is." I remembered the picture Todd drew of his room when we were drawing maps of our bedrooms. He drew his sister lying dead in the middle of the floor! I realized I was not going to learn a whole lot about Todd's relationships with his family from his mother.

What had I seen? What had I missed? What were my feelings? What had I uncovered? What was I going to write? Where were my findings? "It's very important to examine your notes" Sondra reminded us. It was time to write and I felt myself sinking lower in my chair. No clear-cut patterns had appeared, no dramatic insights had unfolded. "I can't do it" I whispered to myself. "I don't even know where to begin."

In the classroom, the end of the year was approaching. Todd's behavior was becoming increasingly difficult. He was fighting on the play ground, tormenting and being tormented by other children. When teams were chosen for softball, Todd was one of the last to be picked. He was feeling lonely, left out and sad. Much of the torment was unknown to me since it consisted of subtle insults whispered under the breath at close range or hidden swipes out of my sight. All of these things isolated Todd from the rest of the class and he was miserable.

I planned a class trip to Stony Brook Museum as part of a unit on Long Island History I decided to drive the whole class in a mini-bus. Aware of the responsibility, I instructed the students carefully on proper bus behavior. Todd sat with the rest of the boys near the back almost out of my rear view mirror vision. Things were fine on the way to the museum but, on the way back heat and excitement had taken their toll. Teasing began, tempers flared. As we drove into the school parking lot Todd, unable to control his anger and frustration any longer, lunged forward and bit two boys.

Oh Lord, I thought, as the bus ground to a halt, so much for my theory!

By June, I knew it was time to begin writing up my observations--"analyzing my data" Sondra called it. I was having a hard time. Why couldn't I begin, get something started, even one idea? It just proved one thing. I was a teacher, not a writer. What made me think I could write anything? Why had I said I would do a case study? I had all this information but what in the world should I do with it? Well, I thought, why not do just what I told the children to do. Put down one word and see where it leads you. "Todd" I wrote. A picture of Todd's shiny blond hair flashed im my mind and I was able to continue-"Todd is a bright, intelligent fourth grader who loves to write. He sets things down on paper with an intensity unusual in a child this young. Often a smile plays around his mouth as he works but Todd is unaware. Sometimes he stares into space as if he is seeing his action packed stories unfolding before his eyes and he just has to write down the scenes, as they unfold." Here I paused. I had a description of Todd writing but now what? I needed direction. I needed a plan. I needed a theory.

Time. Perhaps if I put all this away over the summer, something would click in the fall. I needed to distance myself. I had heard the researchers talking about this idea. They needed to step back too and reflect now that their intense data gathering period was over. I would do what they did. Forget about the whole thing until Fall when the research class resumed and I was fresh from a nice long vacation.

September, 1982. New faces, a new grade level and all too soon I was immersed in teaching children again. Todd was in another wing of the school with another teacher and I barely saw him from one week to the next. Distancing myself continued to be easy.

In the research class the question of case studies came up and I felt a twang of guilt. How easy it would be to forget the whole thing. Weren't we supposed to be teaching the process approach to writing? Hadn't I gone through the process of gathering material for a case study? Did I really have to produce a product? No patterns either in Todd's writing or his behavior had presented themselves. A talk with Todd's teacher revealed that she saw him as a model child with no problems and this year he wasn't doing much writing at all!

I couldn't understand it. I had thought I could do it. I had all this data but nothing to say. I read more case studies and articles. They made it sound so easy. Yet the authors must have had to sift through tons of material to pick out what they wanted to include. How did they decide what not to use? A second year was slipping by and still I had produced nothing.

One day in class I decided to stop pretending that I was able to write up a case study and just let them know how stupid I really was. Why pretend any longer? I was a failure, I had let the group down. I would try to find something else to write about if I could think of anything.

I felt better after confessing my inadequacies but I was puzzled by the Sondra response. "Let me think about it" she said. "I think we can come up with something." I really didn't see what she could come up with. I had gone over and over every aspect, but the thought of arriving at some sort of closure made me hopeful. That hope launched me into three more interviews with Todd.

From him I learned that he wasn't writing as much this year. All the topics were assigned by the teacher and no time was given for sharing. When the class did write, it was on assigned social studies reports, science reports and letters like the one to the local assemblyman concerning the preservation of the pine barrens. All types of writing which I knew Todd resisted doing!

However, two pieces of evidence convinced me that Todd had not lost his enthusiasm for writing. First, he told me that he was writing an adventure story on his own at home. I noticed the animation in his voice as he talked about it.

Later on into the year, he showed me a piece he had written which he was pleased with. While this piece of writing had been assigned after the children had read and discussed many fables, I smiled when I saw that Todd had managed to incorporate violence into a topic assigned by his teacher.

WHY A SPIDER HAS EIGHT LEGS

> The first spider on the earth had one thousand legs. She could lift many things at a time.
>
> One day the spider was crawling around on her one thousand legs when suddenly she saw an ant. The ant looked as if he was suffering from malnutrition. As the spider passed by the ant greedily ripped off one hundred of her legs. The spider was tired and scuttled under a tree to rest.
>
> When she woke up, she saw a red centipede marching by. She waved one of her legs at him. The centipede became jealous and ripped off all but eight of her legs. The spider ran home crying. It wasn't until then that she discovered her silk thread. And whoever came to rip off another leg was soon covered with silk. And that is how the spider kept her eight legs.

June, 1983. The turmoil of those final weeks subsided and there I was-sitting around a table with ten of my colleagues ready to tackle this elusive case study once and for all. I was still willing to try but I had become skeptical. It was up to the researchers to show me the way.

Sondra began by asking me what I had learned during the last two years. I chuckled." I've learned that I am not a researcher and that research is much more complex than I ever imagined."

She waited as I continued, "I've certainly discovered that you cannot decide ahead of time what you will learn." I began thinking about the many ways Todd refused to fit into any of my preconceived theories.

"So you've learned a whole lot about the process of becoming a researcher haven't you?" she asked. I nodded. "Instead of trying to write like a researcher about Todd, how about writing as a teacher learning to do research?"

I sat stunned into silence by the possibilities of this suggestion. Something clicked in my mind. It felt right. I nodded my head already forming in my mind the introductory sentences.

She continued, "I know the questions you asked about Todd and his writing are serious ones, but your writing style in your journal and in other pieces is not--you generally inject humor. How about writing about Todd and this case study in your own voice?"

I fled down the hall with my notebook and pencil, all that I would need. I was ready to write. I could be who I was. I could speak in my own voice. Isn't that the most important thing for every writer? Funny, I thought, isn't that one of the lessons I learned from Todd?

TEACHER SHARES

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In my third grade class, the last part of each creative writing period is devoted to sharing. It is a very popular event with children clammering to be allowed to share a piece of writing in progress or a completed story or poem

The child who shares sits on a special big red chair while the class listens attentively on the rug. Each child asks for special help from the group according to his or her needs. "Give me more ideas" might be the request or "Tell me the parts you like best." Maybe "See if this makes sense" will be the imperative.

When the story is read, hands come up and the young author listens to ideas and suggestions accepting them graciously but knowing full well that the decisions to use or reject these ideas and suggestions are entirely up to him. He is in charge of his own writing.

This procedure had been going on for some time in my third grade class and had become a routine.

In the research seminar which I had been attending, 1 teachers talked about the desireability of sharing their writing with students. Those who did the most frequently taught in the middle school or high school where children's maturity might help them understand what a teacher was trying to write. Second grade teacher was writing about a trip he had taken cross country so naturally his students were interested in that. I never wrote anything which I thought my third graders could relate to so I was reluctant to share. I really didn't think they would want to hear anything I wrote and I didn't want to bore them.

Then one day an incident occurred during writing time which I thought might make an interesting article. I wrote the paper and since It involved three children in the class I felt they should read it for accuracy.

Charlotte read it first. She pounced upon the title of her story which I had written incorrectly. "Its not the Zapper Zoomer Zoo," she said. She seemed shocked that a teacher could have made an error of this magnitude. Then she said, handing the piece back to me, "It's good." I glowed.

Next I gave my story to Jeff who had a major part in its inspiration. His serious expression as he read made realize that he felt his proof-reading was an important part of my writing process. "Mrs. Graves" he said tactfully, "You have not written the title of the book you mentioned correctly. I think you need to check it at the library." I thanked him for his help and made a mental note to check the book title at the library.

Then I handed the typewritten sheets to Danielle. Danielle read parts out loud, laughted once or twice and collected quite a crowd before she finished. Upon handing it back to me she said "Mrs. Graves, you should share this story with the class. Lots of other kids will want to hear it."

I thought about what she had suggested and decided yes, I would do it. It felt like something I should try but I was still nervous about sharing.

The following day at sharing time I put my own name bravely at the top of the list of sharers. Immediately whispers arose. "Mrs. Graves is sharing." "Look, Mrs. Graves is going to share."

I decided to show the class my rough draft and the typewritten sheet so that they would see the teacher's, too, crossed out, revised, and added parts. Standing before the class, now seated on the rug, I began in my best teacher tones the explanation of my rough draft.

Charles tapped me on the shoulder. "Mrs. Graves" he whispered. "You should be sitting on the big red chair." Well, of course! I realized suddenly that this class of mine was not looking upon me as the teacher, but as a fellow writer who wanted to share, and as such I should be following the prescribed procedure. I knew also that my approach was all wrong and what I should do was start reading my piece and stop trying to teach them something. I opened my mouth to begin and Charlotte raised her hand. "What do you want from us?" she asked. My mind raced. I hadn't even thought about asking them for help. I had only thought about sharing as a demonstration of a teacher who also writes, "Well," I said lamely, "See if this story makes sense to you." The audience I had written for was adult. I wasn't sure third graders would really understand. I looked out at 16 uplifted faces and began. They laughed at the funny part. They didn't fidgit or whisper. They attended to their task. Did the story make sense, and if it didn't what could they suggest to make it more clear?

I finished reading and there was a ripple of applause. I hadn't expected that. What a good feeling! Now a few hands were up. "Jeff" I said.

"You might have told a little more about the class," he suggested. "People might be interested in what the other children in the class were writing." I nodded graciously and thanked him for his suggestion, thinking back in my piece where this additional information might fit in.

Charles' hand was raised. "You leave people wondering what Charlotte and Jeff said in their conference. You could have asked them." His suggestion made sense and I told him so.

Danielle burst forth with "I liked the part where you told about Jeff's dog eating stones." A chorus of "I liked the part where you said..." followed and I felt the happy sensation having my writing accepted and appreciated.

Her I was, sitting humbly in the big red chair, not as a teacher, but as a writer who had finally dared to share!

Sharing as a Motivation for Writing

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The idea of sharing is not a new one in elementary school. "Show and tell" is an important part of Kindergarten and first grade. However, children are not allowed to share stories they have written often enough. If students do not read their stories aloud to one another, their audience is limited to three or four people—the teacher, their parents, themselves. It seems to me that writing to such a small audience is not much motivation for any child, especially if this audience is apt to be critical. Also, why wait until a piece is completed before sharing it? Wouldn't it be better to share as the piece progresses? Then it would be possible to determine audience reaction and get some immediate feedback. It made sense to me to include a time for sharing in every writing session. In my fourth-grade class we began to write three times a week and to set aside the last 15 minutes of each 1-hour writing period for sharing.

At first the children were somewhat reluctant to share their work. This was a new experience. Kevin confided, "Sometimes I don't read so good. The kids might laugh at me." Amy whispered with a sigh, "Maybe they won't like my story." I understood the risk sharing a piece of writing would involve, so I decided to start out sharing something safe—the covers of their writing journals. They had decorated these with felt-tip markers and were proud of their artistry.

On the second day, an extrovert with a good sense of humor broke the ice. Tom read:

> *Dirt Bikes*
>
> *On your marks, get set, go!* Eric in his Yamaha 80 in the lead. I am sorry to announce that Jeffrey jumped to the moon. Matt's hairy Suzuki 510 is up and burning in first place, here comes Kenny B., the hairy kid. . . . Up the ramp a kickout! *Smash!* I spoke too soon, Matt and Tom are in the lead. Both with Yamaha 510's. Kenny S. and Mike M. are burning rubber *Bam!* What a smash

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> crack there goes Eric's frame. . . . *Wipe-out!* And down the hill he goes. Let's cover him in the ambulance. I have no brain, oh it must have gushed out on that suicide course you took! You're *lucky!*

Tom's expression and timing brought the story to life, and we all laughed. The next day others wanted to read their funny stories, and we were off! Not everybody shared right away. Not everyone was as good a reader as Tom, but the message came through that sharing was fun and that writing something to share was enjoyable.

During the first part of the year I sat on a stool next to the person sharing in order to offer my support, to watch the reactions of the other children, and to model good listening. As the year progressed and the children became more confident, I realized I wasn't needed in the front of the class anymore. I could be part of the audience. So I moved from my stool to the steps on which my students gather for sharing time.

Wherever I sit, though, I teach listening skills. Children of the television age are not naturally good listeners. They are used to giving only partial attention to performances. While watching TV at home, they talk to one another, move around, eat, write, and do numerous other things. A live performance requires a different kind of behavior. I ask listeners to give a reader their undivided attention. I ask them not to play with something in their hands or talk or move about, but to think only about what they are hearing.

To demonstrate how to listen carefully to one another, I modeled a listening session with Kevin. Kevin and I sat in front of the room. Kevin had written a piece about his bedroom and had told me about it prior to writing. He had mentioned a fish tank that meant a lot to him because his grandparents had given it to him. In his draft he had not included a word about the fish tank. When he finished reading aloud I responded directly to what I had heard by saying, "Kevin, I really feel as if I had a tour of your room. I could picture your bed and the wooden chest next to it and your baseball glove in the corner." Then, remembering our earlier talk, I urged him on: "Didn't you tell me you also had a fish tank? Kevin smiled. "Oh, I forgot about that. I guess I'd better put that in because it's pretty important to me."

The children began to see that good listeners not only describe vividly what they see and hear; they also help writers add more to their stories. As listeners, children are encouraged to comment on what they like in a piece of writing: a descriptive word or phrase, an unusual name for a character, or a new way of looking at something. One day Amy said, "I like it when you tell something about the people in the story. I like to know who the story is about at the beginning." Kevin said, "When Tom was telling about the motorcycle race, I got pictures in my mind."

The children developed an enormous enthusiasm for writing. They could hardly wait for sharing time to read what they had written. Often they would take their pieces home at night to work on them. However, one problem occurred because of too much enthusiasm for sharing. Children began writing down anything just to have a chance to get up and share. Quantity was in; quality was out. I realized something had to be done. Sharing just for the sake of sharing was not what I had in mind.

Calling a group meeting, I began: "Most of you like to share your writing with the class." Heads nodded in agreement. Richard said, "John and Tom want to share every day, and sometimes other people don't get a turn." Janine blurted, "The boys all write about motorcycle races, and it gets boring." Cindy agreed. "Sometimes they write so fast they can't even read their own writing." I said, "It sounds like people aren't putting enough thought into their writing. It's not so interesting to hear the same kinds of stories over and over, and it's easier to listen when someone reads well." We decided to stop sharing for a week and then allow only four or five children to read their work each day. Those children would read their pieces to me ahead of time, and together we would decide if they were ready to share with the class.

During the week without sharing some children began writing longer pieces. When sharing time resumed, I decided to limit to four the number of children who would read their stories aloud that day. I wrote their names on the board early in the writing period. This took away the children's impulse to rush through an idea and scribble it down in order to have something to read to the class. Some of the girls who had been shy about sharing stood up before the group and read. Some of them started a trend of writing mystery stories. A couple of boys wrote long and involved football pieces. The action pieces continued, but descriptions of people were put in. Attention to details and much more conversation began to appear. Things calmed down, and children took more time and produced better pieces.

As a result of sharing, I saw children gain in self-confidence. Shy children who had been reluctant to speak before a group were encouraged by their peers with statements like, "Wait 'til you hear the great football story Jeff wrote." Amy, who had never volunteered to read her work to her third-grade class, read an exciting mystery story after being urged on by her classmates. "It's really good, Amy. We all want to hear it." Later in the year she stood up before 80 students and told a fairy tale in a story-telling contest. Her parents were astonished.

Students' oral reading also improved as a result of sharing their writing. When children read their own stories out loud, they naturally use all the expression they "heard" as they wrote them. John started a trend of incorporating sound effects into his oral renditions. His tires shrieked, his horns tooted, his jets roared in takeoff. His characters spoke with emotion and took on personalities.

Along with increased expression came increased need for punctuation. Quotation marks were essential to keep track of who said what. Children learned that punctuation was there to help the reader. It became important to them.

The quality of writing has improved. Children write more complex stories when they know they will share aloud what they are writing. They write longer pieces because their audience encourages it. Along with being fun for the children, sharing motivates them to write. It improves written and oral communication skills, promotes poise, and gives children a chance to be in the spotlight. Ask the children in this fourth-grade class about sharing, and they will agree with John: "Sharing is fun! I love it when I write a funny story and make people laugh."

"Can You Read My Story?" Approaches to Conferencing with Children

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"Can you read mine *now?*"
"When can you read it?"
"Look what I did last night!"
"I got an idea!"
"I forgot what I wanted to write."
"I didn't change it."
"I'm stuck."
"Help!"
"I finished!! I think."

There seem to be innumerable ways for students to initiate writing conferences with me. The conferences are my way of giving them the opportunity to grow as writers, to see themselves as people who communicate and learn through writing. Conferencing sets a tone in the room, a message that writing and thinking are clarified and refined by sharing, discussing, revising, and sharing again. Writing is not a solitary process; it requires feedback from teachers and peers.

Many people have written about writing conferences between teachers and students (Calkins 1982; Graves & Murray 1980; Jacobs & Karliner 1977; Kitagawa 1982; Moffett & Wagner 1976). Conferences are, perhaps, the most idiosyncratic element in a curriculum that is, by its very nature, interpreted and implemented differently by every person who teaches writing. In my fourth- and fifth-grade classroom, a writing conference is simply a meeting to share ideas about a piece of writing in progress, a potential piece of writing, or the writing process itself.

"Can you read my story?" is an invitation for me to do something. For a writing conference to be successful, I have to discover what the student's purpose is in wanting a conference. Often it is clear. Kelly says, "I didn't like the dream part so I changed it. Will you read it?" Or Sean says, "I think that part sounds funny. How can I fix it?" Chris comes to talk about ideas: "I have this idea I'm trying to work out" or "I'm stuck. I can't think of what to write next." Some know they want a response to a whole piece: "Tell me if you like it," or "I think I finished. What do you think?" Others have no specific purpose, but know they need a sympathetic ear. Emily tentatively asks, "Will you please read this?" If I ask Jenny what she wants me to do, she responds, "I don't know—just go over it!"

The way I respond, therefore, changes from conference to conference and student to student. Depending on each student's needs and expectations and my perception of that student's writing needs, I adopt one of several approaches in the conference—that of prodder, reflector, or collaborator. These are not actually *different* kinds of conferences; rather, it is a recognition on my part that I do various things with *different* children. I have also found that my approach stays fairly consistent for each individual for long periods of time.

These approaches may be thought of as means for children to gain increasing skill as writers. Students often come to conferences with specific purposes in mind; I, too, have goals. As children become more skillful, new needs become apparent in their writing, and a fresh approach in their conferences becomes necessary. This new approach subsumes prior areas of discussion, and it builds on many previous experiences. These approaches can be seen as levels of conferencing, each one building on and including what went before. Novice writers need much prodding; children with whom I take a reflector or collaborator approach do not always need prodding, but I must often show them portions of their writing that lack focus or require additional detail.

The prodder

My major goals are to get children to elaborate or focus on one subject. Both objectives require similar sorts of conferences and questioning techniques. I say things like, "That's great! But I want to know more about ———"; or, "What was the most exciting thing to happen? OK, tell about that"; or, "What day was it? The weather? Where were you? What time? Who else was there?"

Children who require this type of approach are writing but are not sure of their control of topic or language. They need help finding their subject—what it is they are trying to tell about—and then help elaborating on the theme. For example, in October, Emily was writing about a summer trip. The assignment was to write a memory piece, and this was clearly an exciting event in her life. She wrote:

> I don't know how it started. I think my dad asked my mom if she wanted to take

> a trip. . . . We finally went to bed. In the morning we got dressed and packed. And then got in the van and went. We drived for four hours then we stopped at Howard Johnsons for breakfast. Then we drived four more hours and stopped for lunch. We took our own lunch with us. Then four hours later we got there. She lives on a long dirt road. My friends name is Sara. . . .

Notice the choppiness, how each sentence is a new event in the trip, and everything is given equal weight. Prodding for details or other things that happened only made things worse; more unconnected details were added, often not in any logical sequence. But she was able to add detail, to recognize that there was more information even if she could not decide what was more important or interesting.

In February, Emily did a revised version of this piece. Although she still needed prodding, my questions changed from "Tell me more about ———" to "What was most exciting?" and "Describe the ———." By this time of the year, Emily could elaborate but now needed to start picking and choosing things that were most important from a wealth of detail and to decide which aspects of the trip to focus on. She could do this but did not feel ownership over the ideas or reasons for change. Emily wrote, "I like the way he [Mr. Silver] tells me to change it. I think his ideas are good." The locus of control is still mine, but she manages to write a piece that is both elaborated and organized, which is a big step.

> I do not know how it started. My dad asked my mom if she wanted to go on a trip. . . . We drove and drove. My dad saw a place we could eat breakfast. After we ate we drove some more. It was one o'clock. We found a place where we could have our lunch. It was in West Virginia. We stopped at this place with a big hill goind down. It has green grasshoppers and gray crickets. After lunch Amy and I rolled down the hill. Tommy and David ran around. We finally got there around eight o'clock. When we got there Sara was sitting on the steps. . . .

The reflector

Once student writers can select a topic and elaborate on it, my approach changes to that of "reflector." My goal now is to get students to clarify what they are going to say and to focus on how clear they can make their messages to an audience. These children have stories to tell. They elaborate well and can identify the plot outlines in their stories; what they have difficulty with at this stage is eliminating extraneous information and "showing, not telling" incidents and feeling. They often know what is and is not working in a particular piece but need help working on alternatives. When Sean asks, "I think that part sounds funny. How can I fix it?" he is asking me to do a particular thing—focus on making a small section communicate what he is trying to say.

Jenny's purpose, although she cannot articulate it, is to have me help her pick apart her writing, both minutely ("Is there a better word than ———?") and globally ("This part doesn't go here. I didn't explain it at all!"), and to compliment her on parts of her piece that work well. For example, Jenny came to me with a story that said she thought was done, but she was not sure. In it, Honeysuckle (the main character) wakes up to see a "frightfully ugly scaled face staring at her." The monster leaves, but,

> Two days after the creature came, he came back again. This time they surrounded him and asked him to stay. The creature willingly agreed so all of the people including Honeysuckle pitched in to help the ugly creature. They taught him how to be kind and helpful toward others and share their glories. Soon his ugliness faded away and he became a handsome man. . . . So I guess they lived happily ever after.

I read this and asked her if the creature was under a magic spell, where he came from, and how they taught him to be kind. She answered, "I don't know. I'll have to think about it."

Children at this stage in their development as writers want conferences with me more frequently than at any other time. They recognize that conferencing helps them make their writing better, but their emphasis is on improving stories, not form or theme. Kelly writes, "You usually tell me to show not tell and to describe the place where my story is. It's helpful . . . when I'm all through revising and editing it comes out to be a good story usually." They are, however, still unsure of their control. "He [Mr. Silver] says two different things. He likes my pieces but always finds something wrong with it. He says 'It's your decision, not mine' about changing something I like [but] I do anyway." Amy cannot yet decide herself how a piece or section should be written or stick to her guns when she thinks she is right. Children who require me to be a reflector, then, are struggling with their emerging sense of ownership of their writing, but they will subordinate that to their major goal, improving stories.

Not surprisingly, after several days Jenny said she had an idea for a new ending and wished to know if it was all right to try it. I encouraged her to; after all, if she did not like the new parts, she still had her old one. Jenny then proceeded to turn a four-page story into a 10-page story with a much more complex plot, two simultaneous settings (Honneysuckle's land and the creature's cave), a search for the kidnapped Honeysuckle, bravery, trust, and again, finally, the creature's transformation.

> She froze in horror. . . . The ugly creature grabbed Honeysuckle with his sharp claws and gave a fierce howl then retraced his steps. . . . With a large jump they left Love. He never realized that he was leaving some 3-toed footprints behind him. . . . Suddenly the place began to get dark, they were in the Black Forest! . . . Back at Love, everybody was worried. . . . They formed a search party of brave men and followed the footprints out of Love. The search party courageously entered the Black Forest, they were all afraid. . . . Cupid bravely asked the creature to come back with them. The creature willingly nodded his head. . . . Soon his ugliness faded away. . . . So I guess they lived happily ever after.

The collaborator

Very few elementary school writers are ready for true collaboration, a mutual exploring of a territory of which they have already mapped the outlines. Students at this stage demonstrate ownership over their writing; they do not want me altering their ideas (they already have a sense of the "meaning" in their writing) but want me to help them explore, expand, clarify, and build on their ideas (kernels of understanding they have found).

Chris, for instance, usually comes for a conference before he has written anything or when he is stuck, but rarely to have me help him revise. A recent story of his involved a magic Rubik's Cube: each time the cube was turned the protagonist was transported to another land. Chris had the structure of the piece fully thought out; he just needed to fill it in satisfactorily. "It takes three turns of the cube to get back to where you started, so he has to go to three places. I know two of them—upside down and backwards. What could the third one be?" We decided he could write the ending of the story first (he "knew" what would happen ultimately), and that would give both of us time to think of some possibilities for his third world. A couple of days later we spent 15 minutes together with some other children, exploring ideas, giggling, building on one another's insights. Chris chose "inside out" as a third place to describe in his story; it was clearly his decision, but the effort was collaborative, involving several days of thought and sharing with a number of us.

The paradox in collaboration is that, although it is the most inclusive approach I take, incorporating all the things I do as a prodder and reflector, it is also the least intrusive. This occurs because of the sense

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of ownership students at this stage have over their ideas and writing; they have images of themselves as writers with very personal styles and habits, and they resist advice that runs counter to these self-concepts. They are eager to start discussions on how writers write and to keep process journals, but they will take others' ideas and change them, incorporating them into their own visions. Chris explains it this way: "I need writing conferences a lot so I can get ideas that are from your ideas; close to the same idea but changed."

Students who are ready for collaboration experiment with forms and with modes of discourse, talking easily about ideas and with some sophistication about the writing process itself. Lara, age 11, writes:

My ideas are flowing, growing and growing,
Filling up my brain.
    They're stuck in my pencil,
    The writing utensil
And won't come out again.

Epilogue

Writing conferences are for me the most satisfying and frustrating parts of teaching writing. They are what make me feel great about helping children discover that they can write, that they have things to say that others want to hear. But conferences also point out how slow progress can be and how limited my influence really is. The most satisfying conferences are ones where there is give and take; I try to understand what students want to accomplish, and students try to clarify their thoughts and ideas.

When I asked my students to write about conferences, they indicated that conferences are important to them also. Deane wrote, "The way you help me is when I can't think of anything to write you would tell me and that would get me started." Improving story content is crucial. Jenny says, "When I go to you to help me when I'm stuck on a story, you always help me think of ideas and how to improve my story." Lisa echoes, "[We] talk about it and I change a lot of things in my story and it makes a lot more sense; [you] help me understand things that I don't understand." The improving is their responsibility. Peter wrote, "It's hard to change my story without any help; I want your opinion about it." And Sue adds, "I like the way you let me do all the fixing of the story." And then there is the sort of comment that makes conferencing worthwhile: "It's nice to have someone to help me make my writing much more fun to do!"

Finally, no matter how unsatisfactory some conferences appear to be, I have come to believe that they are worthwhile. With trust and a little prodding, reflecting, or collaborating, children will feel encouraged to write, put effort into their writing, and find pleasure in the outcome.

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A POINT OF VIEW ABOUT POINT OF VIEW:
CAN FIFTH GRADERS DO IT ?

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A POINT OF VIEW ABOUT POINT OF VIEW: CAN FIFTH GRADERS DO IT?

Fifth graders can describe characters, outline plots, and answer interpretive questions about texts during Junior Great Books discussions. But could they rewrite a story from a different point of view? As a participant in two National Writing Project summer workshops, point of view pieces provided a powerful way for me to look at revision and writing process. It forced me to read a text very closely, to make the story my own, to enter the situations in the story and see myself in it so that I could transform it through the eyes of another character. I had shied away from using point of view in my class, however, because I thought that fifth graders could not change their frame of reference adequately to explore the meaning and issues of a story through point of view writing.

I did wonder, however. I wondered if they could describe the characters adequately enough to understand their motivations. I wondered if they could take those understandings and translate the story from another point of view. And I wondered if all the effort would effect their understanding of the story, themselves, and others. I did't think it would be particularly effective, but I tried anyway. How wrong I was! As a group they exceeded my expectations in every way, and as individuals showed insight, empathy and understanding.

The Buildup

The story I chose for the assignment was "All Summer in a Day" by Ray Bradbury, which is included in the Great Books Foundation's Junior Great Books Series 5. The story takes place on Venus, where a colony of Earthlings is established. The planet is habitable, but they must live underground because it rains constantly; the sun appears for only an hour once every seven years. The protagonists are two nine-year-olds: William, born on Venus, popular, class leader; and Margot, born on Earth (the only one in the class), moved to Venus when she was four, remembers the sun (also the only one), different, friendless seemingly by choice. Margot's inability to deal with a sunless world and the other children is described through vignettes, and her and her classmates' misunderstandings set the stage for the climax, when the class, at William's urging, locks Margot in a closet just before the predicted appearance of the sun, and then forgets her in the excitement of going outside for the first time. The story end with the rain starting, a description of the children, and their remembering Margot and releasing her.

I felt that this was a good selection for several reasons. There are only two characters; others are mentioned, but left anonymous. The ending is ambiguous - what does happen after Margot is released? There are issues in this text, real issues that can be addresssed superficially, intellectually, but issues that can only be fully dealt with by placing oneself into the story and merging one's own experiences and knowledge with the events of the story. Why is Margot made so different? How could William be so cruel? Why didn't any of the other children get involved? What is this story about? Within the framework of the major facts of the story, then, was much room for children to select divergent points of view, and to explore the characters' (and author's) motivations and intent.

The group of fifth graders I worked with were above average readers who had spent time throughout the year discussing components of stories - plot, setting. character, incident, conflict, resolution. After reading "All Summer in a Day," we outlined the plot specifically to isolate the key facts, and I asked them to write everything they knew about Margot and William - how they looked, acted, felt, personalities, relationships with others, and so on. These activities set the context for writing. The next part of the assignment was to rewrite the story from a different point of view. They were to choose Margot, William, or one of the other characters to tell the story, and they should be ready to share these at our next meeting.

When they shared, I asked the group to pay attention to two things; first, did the writer stick to the facts of the story, and second, was it clear from whose point of view the story was being told. There was considerable discussion about the facts and how far one could deviate from them; this also required continually checking back with the text to verify information. Several students were unhappy with their own or others pieces; they felt that too much had been taken word-for-word from Bradbury, and that it was unnecessary to repeat the bulk of the story, only those parts that the narrator could tell about. This led to a general discussion of revision and necessary elements in the story. At the end of the period, I told them to take their drafts, the responses they heard today, their characterizations and go home and revise.

And revise they did. The pieces that came back were rich in many ways. There were new insights into the story, understandings of why the other children let William bully Margot, grapplings with the feelings of

Margot, William and the others, selecting portions of the story to omit and include, attempts to rewrite the story using totally different forms, and criticisms of Bradbury's choices at critical points in the story. They relied on their perceptions of Margot's and William's personalities for the validity of their points of view; if William felt a certain way, then he could act that way. And they also relied on their own feelings and reactions; could they have acted like Margot, or William, or the other children? In other words, they dealt with the issues in the story by placing themselves in the text and applying all they knew to the text. They didn't just deal with the words of the story, but dealt with themselves, and thus came away with a richer understanding of the story.

They also used a variety of devices to allow them to get into the story. Some stuck to Bradbury's outline; others used parts of the stories, omitting sections or adding endings. A few of them tried completely different forms. The stories that are reproduced here are examples of all those approaches.

The Children's Stories -Andria

It was raining. It had been raining for 7 years. We, us children, from the rocket men and women sent here to live on Venus, were sitting in our school room.

"It's stopping, the rain, it's stopping!"

"It is!"

All but one of us couldn't remember a time when there wasn't rain and rain and rain. She was Margot, the one that stood apart from the rest of us. We were all nine years old.

I dreamed about the sun. How bright and yellow it was, so warm. But I always awoke to the pit pat pit pat, the rain, and my dreams were gone.

Yesterday we read about the sun. We wrote about it too.

"I think the sun is like a flower
that blooms for just one hour."

That was Margot's poem.

"You didn't write that!" protested William.

"I did so!" Margot shouted. I was about to step out and say something but the teacher beat me to it.

"William!" she shouted.

But that was yesterday. Now we were all looking out the window waiting for the sun to come out and shine its bright yellow face.

"Where's the teacher?"

"She'll be back."

"If she doesn't hurry we'll miss it."

Margot stood alone once more, staring out the window.

"What are you looking at?" Margot said nothing. "I'm talking to you!" He gave her a shove, but she didn't move. Margot wouldn't play any games with us.

Margot lived on Venus only 5 years. She used to live on earth. She remembered the sun. We lived on Venus all of our lives.

"You don't remember the sun!" all of us shouted except me. I thought she remembered and I felt sorry for her. I would say something, no I won't, yes I will, no I won't, yes I will.

"William!" I shouted "shut up! How do you know if she doesn't remember. The only one that knows is her!" I felt like a fool but I had to say it. I was fed up with that William. He didn't pay any attention to me and went on with Margot.

"Get away!" He gave her another push. "What are you waiting for?"

Margot turned and looked at William. You could tell what she was waiting for by looking at her eyes. "Well don't wait around here!" cried William. "You'll not see anything!"

William was jealous of Margot because she could remember the sun.

"Nothing!" he cried "it was all a joke, wasn't it?" he turned to us.

"Nothing!" they all said but I disagreed.

"William," I shouted, everyone stared. I went on "Why don't you leave Margot alone. If your jealous, thats your problem!"

"You shut up," he said back to me "this doesn't concern you so shut up!" More stares. Then they turned to Margot.

"It's not a joke, its coming out, you'll see!"

"Let's put her in the closet before the teacher comes!"

"No," she said moving away. William and the other kids dragged her back into a closet. I just followed along behind, I wasn't going to say anything else.

We went back to the classroom just in time to greet the teacher. "Are we all here?"

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she asked.

"Yes!" I remembered Margot in the closet but didn't say anything.

It rained still more. We went toward the door, me last.

The rain stopped.

The sun came out. We ran out into the sunshine. I stood looking at the sun, then I ran and ran and ran, smelling then picking the flowers. I caught up with the other children and then ---

The rain.

It started again.

I stood looking at the gray sky. "Come back sun come back" tears ran down my face as I watched the sun disappear behind a cloud. Then I went back to the schoolhouse along with the other children. We closed the door and heard raindrops everywhere.

"Seven more years?"

"Yes."

"Margot!"

"What?"

"She's still in the closet."

"Oh no!" We stood still and looked at the floor.

We walked down the hall and let Margot out. I felt so sorry for Margot that she missed the sun. And I was very mad at William even though I thought he forgot to let her out. I looked at his frowning face and walked back to the class.

There were two issues Andria had to deal with to satisfy her understanding of the story. What could motivate William to treat Margot the way he did? And, how could it be that none of the children in the story come to Margot's defense?

Andria, in her character descriptions, point of view and discussion comments showed her need to explain the reasons for behavior. To do this, she had to ascribe feelings to the characters, something Bradbury doesn't do. She understands that the way you act towards someone depends on your feelings - feelings about that person, the other people around you, the setting you're in, your self. She did this intellectually; she decided that William was jealous of Margot, jealous of her memories, her intelligence, her ability to communicate her knowledge of the sun, and her recognition by the teacher. Jealousy, Andria thought, could make a basically nasty peron act even worse.

Jealousy can be a powerful motivation. The rest of te class hated "her possible future" (Bradbury), returning to Earth, while they would be stuck in the rain on Venus. So they, too, could treat Margot badly for similar reasons. And Margot didn't help her own cause, Andria recognized, by refusing to play, or smile, or sing, standing aprt from the other children. But to fully understand her other crucial issue, why none of the other children helped Margot, a more plausible explanation was needed. To get an answer required Andria to enter the story, to try to experience what those children were going through. She need her point of view piece. By adopting the role of one of the anonymous students, and making that student sympathetic towards, but not friends with, Margot, she was able to see what else was motivating the other children. The answer, for her, was fear: fear of standing up to a bully with no other support; fear of missing the sun if it did come out; and fear of being too different, of being in the same category as Margot.

Chrissie

> The classroom was a state of confusion. Julie, Max, Burt and Amy were pressing up on the window so hard that their noses were smushed. I, the only sensible one, stepped back 6 inches. Then the children began talking (it really sounded quite dumb).
>
> "Ready?" This was Julie, ever so prepared.
>
> "Ready." Max said this. He answered anyone.
>
> "Now?" Burt didn't want to miss any excitement.
>
> "Soon." Max answered again.
>
> "Do the scientists really know? Will it happen today, will it?" This, of course, was Amy. She was so nice that no one minded her. She was so dumb that she just opened here mouth at anything. Her stupidity made me squirm, so I replied.
>
> "Look, look; see for yourself!"
>
> As usual, it rained. It had been raining for 7 years, nonstop. I wanted to see the sun, but truly doubted that I would. Not one of my classmates remembered the sun, except Margot. She claimed it was like a penny, or a fire on the stove. William strongly disagreed with her, and so did I.
>
> Margot was a small, ghostly brat. She thought she was Ms. Perfect, and always got her 2 cents worth in. Margot stood in the corner

and waited, or sat quietly in her seat while the rest of the class wandered around and chatted.

On many occassions William would sneak up to her and make nasty wisecracks. Personally I think that she deserved them. And when all the class was peering through the window waiting for the sun, William found another chance.

"You ain't gonna see nothin'!" he cried. "It was all a joke, wasn't it?"

I nodded approvingly, and Amy said "Of course." (giggle-giggle)

Margot shook her head violently and spoke. "No! No," she whispered. "It will come out you'll see!"

William couldn't take it. "Nothing," he sneered. "Nothing at all!"

Then a horrible plan come to him. "Hey guys! Lets put her in a closet until teacher comes!"

I shouted "Yea!" and ran to help William. Amy horse-laughed and followed close behind us. The class slowly closed in on Margot. There was no place to go, so Margot was easily captured. William grabbed her wrists and pushed her forward. I clamped my hand over Margot's mouth and pulled. Together we shoved Margot into the closet. William made faces at her and slammed the door shut. Over the snickering and laughing I could hear Margot's muffled cries.

"Help! William! Albert! Let me out!"

I spit at the locked door and walked to my desk. William followed. The class followed him. We were a seated, smiling class when teacher walked in.

"Ms. Elliot! Ms. Elliot!" As teacher walked in the class called "can we have snack?"

"May I, and yes," Ms. Elliot said.

I took out crackers. William displayed a candy bar, which was against school rules.

Suddenly, Peter rose to his feet and exclaimed "Look! The sun! It's out!"

Everyone lept up, and desks were overturned as people madly raced to see the new thing. The big, bright, hot thing they call the sun.

Once outside, shoes were carelessly tossed aside, cloaks were flung far away. Arms were lovingly burned, toes were hot. All was forgotten for the loveliness of the sun.

Then, in the middle of the frolicking, Lisa cried, "Oh, no."

Tommy tilted his head skyward and moaned, "The Rain."

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The class watched, as the remnants of the sun disappeared. As we stood there, the rain came harder. Then it poured.

We walked inside and immediately Amy wailed "Margot. We left her in there."

A murmer ran throughout the room.

I looked around at their stunned faces. For a moment I felt happy, and then all thoughts of meanness left me. I closed my eyes to fight the tears.

Then, slowly, slowly William unlocked the door.

Chrissie also had two issues she wanted to explore. Like Andria, she wanted to know what could make someone act as cruelly as William had. And, how would such a person feel afterwards?

Her approach to resolve these issues was different from all the other writers. She is a warm, understanding, friendly girl who would do nothing intentionally to harm anyone else's feelings. Chrissie's characterizations of William and Margot were typical of the others in tone; William is smart, mean, a negative leader; Margot is different, quiet, reserved, unfriendly. But despite her own personality, and her agreement with others in the class about the personalities of the protagonists, she chose to take the point of view of a boy who is William's best friend, and at least as much of a bully.

Using this perspective allowed her to describe several students in the class, including Margot, and to explore the motivations of William by role-playing a similar personality type. The answer to her first question was easy - difference, whether it be stupidity, looks or history, is reason enough to be mean to someone if you want it to be. And as long as there is support for acting mean from your peers, an individual gains in stature from acting mean.

Her ending gives her reponse to her second question. Even bullies, who have no compunctions about acting cruelly, can feel remorse given the right set of circumstances. And that gives Chissie hope for dealing with bullies in the real world.

Jeff

"William."
"What."
"Is it really gonna happen?"

"What happen."

"The rain, stop, like the scientist said."

"No, you believe that junk, its a joke, yeah, a joke."

"My mom said its gonna stop."

"Your mom's an old hag, what does she know." I was scared to reply in fear that he would punch me and tell the teacher that I knocked over the fish bowl.

Today is Thursday 6/3/2034. Margot the faggot just walked into the room a little while ago. William is making a bet with Margot that the rain wouldn't stop. I asked rain brain if the rain would stop, he said, "it's actually raining 1.5 times harder then it was earlier this morning."

Unfortunately William heard that. He pushed Margot and said, "faggots wrong, its not gonna stop raining." Margot slowly walked away crying.

Now its 12:00 and its still raining. Margot was looking for her sun kit which the teacher gave us a half hour ago. On the other side of the room William was sitting when he just said, "let's lock Margot in the closet."

Its a great idea, we would lock Margot in the closet and let her out an hour later and tell her that the sun came out. Quickly!! William grabbed Margot's sun kit. Margot said, "hey gimme that," as she chased William down the hall. William is passing it to me; here it comes! Good I caught it. I'll pass it to Margot when she gets in the closet. Passed it to her.

It's happening, it's really happening!!! This beautiful light... this blinding white light... is the sun!!! I walked slowly towards the beautiful flowers. I'm running off from the rest of the class and I won't stop.

It's an hour later and it's starting to rain. Somebody said, "Where's Margot?"

Jeff adopted a position somewhere between Andria's and Chirssie's. He could understand William being so mean; he's "sort of a snob that doesn't like to be wrong at any cost." He could also understand that none of the other children would like Margot, either; she's "a teacher's model of a good kid." So for Jeff, the question was how did William get all the other children to go along with the idea of locking Margot up?

Jeff is a loner, having trouble keeping friends for very long, but is also very bright and has an excellent sense of humor. Placing himself in the story as an antagonist to Margot and also a follower of William, not an enthusiastic follower, but one of those kinds of kids who will go along with the crowd, was a natural role for him. William is just as mean to him in his version of the story as he is to Margot, but it makes perfect sense to Jeff to think that Willima's plan was "a great idea." Children will go along, even help, with a plan that will hurt another person if it makes them feel part of the group. It's not fear, or the stature one might gain, but belonging that Jeff feels is the real motivation behind all the other children's complicity. And belonging, feeling like your an accepted member of a group, excuses almost any behavior.

Sue

> "So the scientists really know? Will it happen today, will it?" It had been raining for 7 years without stop.
>
> Margot, a girl who lived on the planet earth and then moved here on planet Venus. And William who had been there all his life.
>
> Margot believed that I, the sun would come out soon. For I had not come out for seven years. And William who was nasty to Margot all the time he didn't believe that I would really come out and for all Margot tried to prove that I would come out William would just argue again and again.
>
> Today, today I'm supposed to come out. For Margot's sake I'm going to try my best to come out.
>
> They were fighting again about the silly matter if I'm going to come out or not. The rain was slowing down, Margot ran to the door but William pushed her into the closet!
>
> Everything was still everything had stopped even the rain. I began to shine my way through the clouds.
>
> William looked totally surprised he had also forgotten about Margot. Well I think that William is selfish and mean to put her in the closet.
>
> First one drop then two, it was starting to rain. Something was pulling me back into the clouds.
>
> William had just remembered about Margot in the closet. He ran to let her out. She was crying for she would not see me for another 7 years.

Sue was the only one in the group to select a point of view that was outside the human characters in the story. It is hard to determine what her issues were, or even if she had any. But her sympathies are clear and well defined, and the choice of an omniscient sun to report the events on Venus gave her the opportunity to express her feelings.

Sue is a quiet, shy girl, reticent to share her feelings or to react strongly to almost anything. When asked to describe Margot, she wrote that "if someone wanted to be her friend they would find out thats she's really nice inside." That also happens to be a description of Sue. Her choice of point of view, then, is understandable - she is trying to create as much distance as possible between herself and the situation Margot finds herself in.

Margot is helpless, and Sue feels helpless to assist Margot in any way. The sun will try to come out "for Margot's sake", but really has no control over the situation. When William locked her in the closet, the sun could only report that it happened. And when it started to rain, "something was pulling me back into the clouds." The sun was omniscient, but powerless. Unfortunately, Sue could not use the experience of the sun to feel more powerful.

These pieces represent the range of types of responses my students wrote. Most of the students stayed within the form Bradbury laid our. Even though they adopted a new point of view, they felt tied to his sequence, devices and mode. Some, like Andria, virtually retold the entire story, complete with background material. Others, like Chrissie and Jeff, chose only the central portion of the story, (from just before Margot got locked in the closet until the end). Three girls (Sue among them) changed the context of the story, one using a dream, another a conversation between a classmate of Margot's and her mother, and Sue's sun. Not all of these efforts were successful, nor were the pieces effective, but the points of view selected and forms attempted were revealing and exciting.

The Payoff

There are many prerequisites for writing effective and successful point of view pieces, and taken as a group show why it is such an effective technique for getting children into literature. To be able to write a point of view, a reader must read a story extremely carefully. It's not enough just to know the plot, or the setting, or the characters. He must see, and feel, the interelatedness of the separate components, how one incident leads to the next, how one character's action leads to others' reactions. Each piece must be analyzed separately, and then put back together to create something greater than the sum of its parts. The key elements must be identified - what must be included to retain the integrity of the story, yet not interfere with reinterpretation to find new meanings. Students can't just be able to name and describe the characters, they have to empathize wih them, understand why and how they got into the predicaments they're in. They have to test their understanding of a character's personality with how he actually behaves in the story, and predict what he would do in different situations. And the student must understand the author's intent in writing the story; what is he trying to show, illuminate, make us understand, and how can that be held onto while writing from a new point of view.

What make this assignment special for me, then, was that I did not believe my fifth graders were capable of those prerequisites. And they proved me wrong, and once again showed me how easy it is to underestimate the capabilities of my students. The pieces made it clear to me how much my students learned about stories, writing and life through doing a point of view piece, and how much richer their understanding of the story became without my attempting to tell them. They found it for themselves. Also, it opens up a whole realm of writing activities that I thought fifth graders couldn't handle, including not only using pieces by published authors, but also reshaping their own stories from various points of view.

They showed me that point of view writing was an effective way for them to become intimately familiar with a text. Their perceptions of Margot and William were crucial to their later analysis of the story and point of view pieces. Once they understood Margot and William, they could check the reality of the story itself, and then find meaning in it for themselves. Do they know anyone like Margot, or William, or the anonymous children and teacher, or do they act that way themselves? Could they see themselves as any of the characters, and what did that teach them about themselves and dealing with others? As they wrote their own points of view, this became the twin bases for testing their writing; could Margot or William have done that, and, would I have done or felt that. They incorporated what they knew about themselves and others with the events of the text, and created for themselves an explanation for the sad and cruel events of the story.

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And by doing so, created meaning where before was only a story.

Section 3

Products

Work produced by the Researchers

Sondra Perl

Reflections on Ethnography and Writing

In 1981, I wrote a research proposal which, if funded, would allow me to leave New York City and my regular college teaching schedule and live for one year in the Shoreham-Wading River school district on eastern Long Island. The reason I was going to Shoreham was that having already been there for three summers directing New York City Writing Project institutes on the teaching of writing and having made brief follow-up visits to the district, I now wanted to document how teachers who wrote and read current research on the writing process went about teaching writing. In fact, my desire to conduct this study came to me quite suddenly one afternoon when I was visiting teachers in Shoreham. I happened to go down to the classroom of one of the teachers and I chanced upon a writing conference that this teacher, Diane Burkhardt, was having with one of her students. I remember thinking that no one really sees the intimate moments when teachers work with students. I knew if I could show what really happens when teachers made a commitment to teaching writing — if I could document the day-to-day interactions and the ways teachers think about what they are doing — that to me would be a contribution to research on teaching worth making.

If I did this, I knew I wanted to be inside the classroom. I wanted to watch teaching evolve. I was firmly convinced that if researchers want to understand a process, they need to observe it as it unfolds — and as a result I wanted to live in classrooms from the first day of teaching until the last. I wanted to come to know the teachers, the students, their writing; I wanted in the terms of ethnography, to immerse myself in the "culture of the classroom," to come to know it as the participants themselves did.

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In 1982, the project received funding from the National Institute of Education. Ten teachers from grades 1-12 volunteered to collaborate with me on the research, which meant that they would each allow me or a research assistant to live in their classrooms, to take notes on what they said and did. They, in turn, would keep teaching journals in which they reflected upon what they were doing in the classroom and they would each do a case study on the writing development of one student in their class. People often ask me, "what's it like to do ethnography?" My response is often a specific one, since I imagine each project develops according to the interests and personalities of the people engaged in it.

To illustrate what our project was like, I'll sketch a typical week.

I wake up at 7:45 a.m. either wondering why I stayed up so late the night before thinking and talking about writing or remembering the last ten years of academic life when I didn't need to be at my college before 9:30 or 10:00 a.m. I then remind myself that Diane and Ross Burkhardt, the two teachers whose classrooms I'm studying intensively and in whose home I'm living, have been up and off to school since 6:00 a.m. and with a pang of conscience get myself out of bed and ready for school. I drive about three miles, past the site for the nuclear power plant that gives the district its money, past the brown, leafless stalks of the vegetable and potatoe fields that border this stretch of Long Island, down the road to the Middle School. After saying good morning to the secretaries, getting a cup of coffee and grabbing my notebooks and a pen, I head for Diane's eighth grade English class which begins at 8:47 a.m.

Diane's students sit in a circle. Once there, I find a vacant seat, pull it into the circle and chat with one or two of the students next to me. In the beginning of the study, I am a diligent notetaker, recording everything I can of what Diane and her students say. Later in
the year, my role shifts from strict observ
to active participant, and it becomes commo
for kids to ask me, "Are we going to do fr
writing today?" or for Diane, after saying goo
morning, to ask me if I recall the plan w
devised for today's lesson. While the clas
clearly remains hers and while my job remair
that of the researcher taking fieldnotes, by th
middle of the year, we have become more li
partners and frequently I find myself inte
rupting my notetaking to participate in clas
discussions, to answer questions or to shar
with students my own perceptions about th
process of writing.

After Diane's class, I head for another win
of the school and become the researcher i
Ross' eighth grade room. Here, although Ro
has been through the same summer trainin
as Diane, it's possible for me to see ho
teachers adapt what they've learned to fit the
individual styles. Ross is the orchestrator
events, the prime mover in his classroom, ar
often the kids are as rapt as I when Ro
brings in a recently finished poem and shar
the excitement and the process he we
through to write it. In fact, the rather dire
impact Ross has can be seen in the numb
of boys who have begun to write poems
the first time in his class.

After taking notes in Ross' class, I return
Diane's second English class of the day.
lunchtime, I often eat with a bunch of eig
grade students in her room. After lunch, I v
a sixth grade classroom and join with stude
in what their teacher Marcia Sitver calls writ
workshop. Here kids can be seen sprawled
couches, sitting on the floor, in the hallw
or at individual tables drafting pieces, c
ferencing with partners or revising their writ
Frequently, students come over to show
what they are doing or to ask for help. O
Marcia can be found off to one side worl
on her own writing.

At the end of this class, I visit one of Di
or Ross' social studies classes in w
students are writing. Then I generally com

whatever correspondence I'm working on, return a few phone calls and check in with my research assistants. If this were a Monday, I might also visit classes in one of the elementary schools or the high school. If it were Tuesday, I'd be preparing for our Study Group meeting in which I meet with the ten teachers in the study and with Nancy Wilson and Jamie Carter — the two research assistants — in order to write, to analyze what's happening in classrooms, to raise questions and to discuss together how the writing process approach works across grade levels. If it were Wednesday, Nancy, Jamie and I would meet until late in the night in order to read our fieldnotes to one another, to catch up on what's happening in the different schools, to be listeners for one another as we begin to discuss our perceptions of classroom events. If it were Thursday, Nancy, Jamie and I would have one final meeting together before we prepared ourselves to return to New York City and to our homes.

In addition, this job entails meeting with administrators, making ourselves available to other teachers and at one point during the year we decided that if we wanted to understand the students' perspectives, we needed to "travel" with them to other classes in order to see how and where English fit into the student's day-to-day life in the school.

The point of this though is not just that we've taken on a big job or that we are busy; it's to show, through sketching a little bit of the particular detail, the many contexts in which writing occurs and which we need to be sensitive to if we are to discover anything about how it is taught and learned. To do this, we've chosen to use ethnography as a research tool.

One of the ideas I want to explore in this paper concerns the ways in which ethnography and writing are similar and why so many of us fascinated by the writing process are drawn so easily and naturally into doing ethnographic research. In fact, I've come to see that the principles which underly a process approach to the teaching and study of writing have counterparts in ethnography. I will now present seven of these common features.

1) Perhaps, the most obvious connection between ethnography and writing is that they are both processes: just as the last decade of work on composing shows, we don't discover how writers write solely by analyzing their products — we certainly won't discover how teachers teach by analyzing their grade books or their lesson plans. In order to discover how a process unfolds, whether it's writing or teaching, we have to observe it and to do this we need a method that itself is process-oriented.

2) A second feature common both to writing and ethnography is that we learn by doing. It's commonplace to say that we'll never learn how to write solely by reading about it or studying what writers say about it; similarly budding ethnographers won't learn the methods and procedures of ethnography merely by reading or studying accounts of other anthropologists. While I'm not advocating the abandonment of careful study and preparation, I am saying that just as we learn to write by writing, so we learn to do ethnography by rolling up our sleeves and getting our hands dirty — in other words, we have to do it in order to learn it and to get better at it.

3) We've come in writing research to believe that writing leads to discovery. As writers, we don't plan ahead of time everything we will say. More often, we discover what we want to say as we go along. So in ethnography, we don't enter a setting deciding ahead of time what events will mean, but we allow the meaning to emerge from our observations and repeated reflections. We may enter with certain guiding questions, but we don't impose our answers. We allow them to emerge from the process of looking.

4) From writing process research, we've come to see that writing is a recursive process. By that I mean that when writers write, certain patterns or routines reoccur throughout the process; we literally go back in order to go forward. For example, writers go back often to words, we reread, we go back to the topic, or we even go back to what we sense about the topic that's not yet in words. So in ethnography we find ourselves going back to fieldnotes, for rereading and studying, to students, to teachers and to our study group for verification and for elaboration, and even more importantly we go back to what we sense occurs in classrooms — to what makes for the context in which writing occurs. Just like in writing, when we go back to the text and let our sense of it tell us where we need or want to go next, so in ethnographic research, when we return to our notes and to the classrooms themselves, our sense of what is occurring deepens and we see where next to direct our observations.

5) In a writing process approach, learning to write involves experimenting with and mastering a number of different forms of discourse and exploring different points view. To me, these are more than rhetoric exercises. I think that when writers shape th ideas and experience in different forms, th begin to see not only how rich experience and how most ideas or experiences le themselves to a variety of interpretations, b also how they, themselves, play an active rc in constructing what experiences mea Ethnography recognizes the multiplicity views inherent in human experience. Th researcher's perspective is seen as one amo many — not as the one representing "th truth." In fact, ethnographers understand th no one ethnographic account is the truth. Y aspects of what is true for people in particul settings can be rendered and recognized, pa ticularly when people share their points of vie and work together.

6) Ethnography is a human model. Bor out of anthropology as a way for the lone a thropologist to immerse herself in and com to understand a foreign culture, it now enabl us to approach classrooms (something we a very familiar with) with freshness and clarit In ethnography, researchers do not reduc classrooms to lesson plans or test scores, b rather we seek to bring to the surface wh is intangible, hidden or overlooked in the u folding of classroom dynamics. The reaso why we are comfortable using ethnography i our study is because our view of teaching an writing is that they are both human processe that ought not be reduced to linear scheme or checklists. In this sense, we view bot writing and teaching as personal and soci acts created by individuals within particu contexts. When we take this kind of approa to such complex phenomena we don't end u with neat research designs, clear-cut bou daries and controlled variables. But we do fi ourselves involved in an enormously rich ta that often requires us to respond on a hum level.

7) Finally, what we've discovered th makes writing and ethnography so similar a what must be there for each one to flour is the development of trust. In classroo we've begun to see that what allows for writ that has voice is a trusting relationship amo the students and between students a teachers — where students feel comforta about taking risks. Similarly, we've come see that ethnography like writing offers us opportunity to go beneath the surface a study what is most intimate in teaching, a that that, too requires the development trust.

CREATIVITY AND THE COMPOSING CLASSROOM: MAKING THOUGHT VISIBLE

Sondra Perl

In a book entitled Silences, Tillie Olsen speaks of "enabling circumstances" and asks, "What are the circumstances that enable people to write?" Implicit in her question is the notion that under the right circumstances, all of us would be creative. After several years of studying the writing process, I have reached a similar conclusion. I believe that the desire to make meaning is a universal one and that the act of writing enables us to do so. And similarly I now ask, under what circumstances are we enabled to write?

For me, this is not a speculative question—but one that guides my research. For the last several years, my research has focused on individuals. I've asked, how do writers write? How do they move from thought to text? And I've attempted to describe this process as I've seen it develop in different writers over different periods of time. But recently, I've begun to see a shortcoming in this kind of approach. Focusing on writers in isolation will not tell us anything about enabling circumstances. As a result, my interests have begun to shift and I've begun to pay attention not only to how writers write, how they externalize their thought and make it visible, but also on the ways in which the environment, including teachers, parents, and peers, is an enabling or an inhibiting vehicle in this process. I've come to think that observing writers in isolation, pulling them into research settings in neatly designed studies was an important first step for research on the writing process but that now we need to examine what writers do in context—in the settings in which their writing actually takes place. And I'm beginning to think that it is the context itself which may be the most important enabling circumstance.

Thus I am now interested in raising questions about creativity and the composing classroom. In particular, I want to ask, what would teachers need to know in order to create enabling circumstances in their classrooms? and what would researchers need to know if they wanted to observe this process?

This topic is particularly compelling to me because I've been spending a lot of time in the past three years in public school classrooms, learning how to observe teachers at work. The teachers are people with whom I've worked for three summers, who have invited me into their classrooms so that I might discover how they are translating the findings from research on the writing process into circumstances that enable students to write. The particular teachers I am referring to all work in the Shoreham-Wading River shcool district on Long Island—a district which has given serious attention to the teaching of writing by involving the teachers in writing workshops over the summer.

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Talking about teachers and their work leads me to comment on what it is like to be an observer in another teacher's room. When I first agreed to visit classrooms, I was concerned. First of all, not only am I a teacher, accustomed to being in control; in this setting I had also been the teachers' teacher. I was worried that I wouldn't like playing the role of the unobtrusive observer. Secondly, I felt awkward. I'm used to teaching adults on the college level and now I was agreeing to visit not only high schools and middle schools, but elementary schools as well. I was not at all sure what one said to first graders about their writing. On my first visit to first grade, I remember walking in and wondering where I should sit—thinking that I ought to act natural and feeling as if I didn't really belong there.

Much to my surprise, first graders made me feel quite at ease. I wasn't in the classroom for more than a few minutes before children were coming over and asking, "May I read you my first published book?" I realized that their teacher, Reba Pekala, knew something about enabling circumstances. Later on in the year, Peggy Waide, a woman I had not worked with, who was a first grade teacher working next door to Reba, invited me to her room to see what she was doing. She then told me that the children were waiting for me to talk to them about writing. I experienced the by now familiar pang of "What do I say to first graders?" and went in. Peggy asked me to sit in the back on a small chair and had the children form a circle on the floor around me. Each child was holding a book he or she had written and was waiting for me to say something. I told them that I visit a lot of first grades, and that most of the teachers there tell me that first graders cannot write. I said that these teachers were just convinced that first graders do not know how to write. At first, the children looked surprised, and then smiles broke out on their faces and they began waving hands and saying, "We can write. First graders can write." I then said, "But they say that first graders don't even know how to spell." One girl looked puzzled for a moment and then raised her hand and explained, "You see, we use invented spelling."

By now the teacher in me wanted to stay in first grade and the researcher in me wished that I had a video-tape to record the children's excitement. But the more serious part of me realized that Reba had communicated something to Peggy about enabling circumstances that enabled this teacher who had not been part of our work in the summer to create a classroom full of writers—writers in first grade, who seemed to know something about their own writing process. The point, though, is not that Reba and Peggy are exceptional. Competent and dedicated, yes—but the experience I am describing was not limited to their classrooms. Wherever I go now in this district, I see students engaged in writing and taking their work seriously whether they are in first grade, 4th, 8th, or 10th. And every one of the teachers I visit knows something about enabling circumstances.

It's going to take a long time for me to discover precisely what these teachers know and how they translate their knowledge into classroom practice, but some of their thinking is given voice in a paper written by Ross Burkhardt, an 8th grade teacher, who describes the way he now teaches writing:

> I am a different person in working with kids and their writing this year.
>
> Examining my own writing process taught me what a writing process is and how to nurture it. And, by inference, I can do the same for others.
>
> Students now collaborate when writing. It seems hard for me to remember those distant days when I believed that collaboration on a writing assignment was akin to cheating.

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> I write every assignment the students do. They see me keeping journals on several topics. They read my letters. They discuss my pieces. I include a piece in the class booklet because I am an author in that class. Many kids were doing the "I don't know what to write" routine earlier in the year. I find less of that now. Somehow they do generate their own topics. I also see an improvement in writing since the fall. The pieces appear to be deeper, more complex, better detailed, more interesting. Sharing writing with peers has helped foster this growth, but that is not the only reason for it.

What are the reasons for the growth Ross sees? What kind of knowledge enables Ross and the others to do what they do? Now I become an observer, a researcher, attempting to make sense out of what I see. Based on my classroom observation and Ross' statements, I have come to some conclusions about fostering creativity in the composing classroom which probably apply to all of the teachers, but which for now I will state only in reference to Ross.

1. *Ross's knowledge is experiential*. He had to examine his own writing process and understand its intricacies, its peculiarities and what he needed to nurture it, before he would know anything about helping his students work through and develop their composing processes.

2. Whether he says it or not, Ross knows that *what he does* communicates more strongly than anything he says. He may talk about writing—but in addition he writes—and he shares his writing with his students. This, I imagine, as much as anything else exemplifies the kind of classroom in which the circumstances are enabling.

3. Ross remarks that he used to think that collaboration was akin to cheating. So did I. I remember as a student when I used to write in class and I would cover up my page so that no one else could see it. Now Ross and I both know that *writers require real audiences*, listeners who are trained to respond sensitively to their developing thoughts. In fact, I would argue that the meanings we construct always emerge from and form part of a social fabric. The more directly we rely and build on the social fabric of the classroom, the more able we will be both to distinguish ourselves from it and to see our connections to it.

4. Ross knows that writers need to develop a *sense of responsibility for their own voices*. He knows that the experience of authoring is one that begins with authority, that writers must start with what they know. Thus in his class, students generate and therefore "own" their own topics.

5. When Ross indicates that his students' papers are better, deeper, more complex, and that sharing with peers has helped, he also says that that is not the only reason. I would say he recognizes that there is never just *one* reason why something changes or improves in one's writing, that *in* writing classes there is never a simple cause and effect relationship to explain growth. In fact, I think he recognizes

the importance of everything that occurs in the classroom or the importance of context.

One might ask, what enabled Ross and Reba and the other teachers in this district to teach the way they do? What allowed them to create such enabling circumstances in the classroom? I can tell you they didn't find this knowledge in a textbook—not even a textbook on the writing process. In fact, to be the teachers they now are, Ross and Reba and the others had to be willing to go through a process themselves.

What I'd like to do now is describe briefly what this process entails and then comment on the kinds of questions this raises for researchers.

First, the teachers had to be willing to see that perhaps they didn't know all there was to know about the writing process. They had to be willing to ask questions. They had to suspend judgment about the answers.

Second, they had to be willing to write and to write seriously for 1 and a half to 2 hours a day for four weeks. They had to be willing to read this writing to their peers and to listen to what their peers said in response.

Third, they had to observe themselves closely. They had to keep notes about their writing process in a process journal. They had to be willing to keep observing, watching for moments of insight, awareness and change that occurred as they worked on their writing and to record these observations in the journal.

Fourth, they had to learn how to listen sensitively to the writing of their peers. They had to learn ways of attending to another writer.

Based on their willingness, these teachers began to see something—They began to understand how their own composing process worked and they began to be sensitive to what fostered composing and what inhibited it. By watching themselves as writers, they began to make some of the same observations researchers make about the process—they began to understand how recursiveness works and when discovery occurs. They began to see how important their peers were in establishing a community of writers with common goals. And they began to see a new role for themselves as teachers—as models who engage in all of the activities that their students engage in.

The teachers who were willing to do this returned to their classrooms with the intention to have their students experience some of what they experienced and the conviction that it was possible. Through writing, they had contacted a desire in themselves, buried for many years, that assured them that they had a wish to be creative, to make meaning out of their experience, and to construct texts that accurately conveyed the subtleties of their thoughts and ideas. They also knew, experientially—that when placed in a setting that acknowledged this desire, writing emerged. And whether they were 1st grade teachers or 12th grade teachers, they knew now that it was possible to create a classroom context that acknowledged and built on this capacity—and that they could do this with their students.

Studying what these teachers do and how they do it poses a challenge to traditional research on writing. It implies that we can no longer merely collect writing samples and pre- and post-tests if we want to understand how children and adults develop as writers. It implies that we have to pay attention to the enabling circumstances of the classroom which means that as researchers we have to immerse ourselves in the life of classrooms and let the students and teachers there teach us what we need to know.

We need, in other words, to develop the perspective of ethnographers and to learn from the work of people like Claire Woods-Elliott at the University of Pennsylvania and Marie Wilson Nelson at George Mason University how to apply ethnographic techniques to the observation of writing classrooms. It means we have to become sensitive to the context in which teaching and learning occur and to move from our observations of behavior to inquire about the meaning this behavior has to the people who engage in it.

Finally, just as writing is a way of making thought visible, so ethnography is a way of making teaching visible. As I have begun reflecting on my experience as a classroom observer, I have come to realize how hidden teaching is . . . how much of it goes on behind closed doors—how little of it is observed except for formal evaluations—and what an extraordinary privilege it is to watch teachers at work. Seeing what they do, listening to their responses, watching how they conference with individual students, seeing the moments that come to life and the moments that fade away, the missed opportunities and the tiny successes, has come to be an extremely powerful experience for me and also an intimate one. It has left me realizing how much more we have to learn and how much more we have to gain by making visible the enabling circumstances of the composing classroom.

CALL FOR PAPERS

Lois Easton, editor of the ARIZONA NEWSLETTER of the Arizona State Reading Council, would like to receive short journal-type articles on any aspect of the teaching of reading or the connections between writing and reading. Articles should be sent to

Lois Easton
3881 E. Gibbon Mountain Place
Tucson, AZ 85718 Tel. 299-5334

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"WHAT'S IN A FIELD NOTE?"

WHEN STUDENTS BECOME RESEARCHERS

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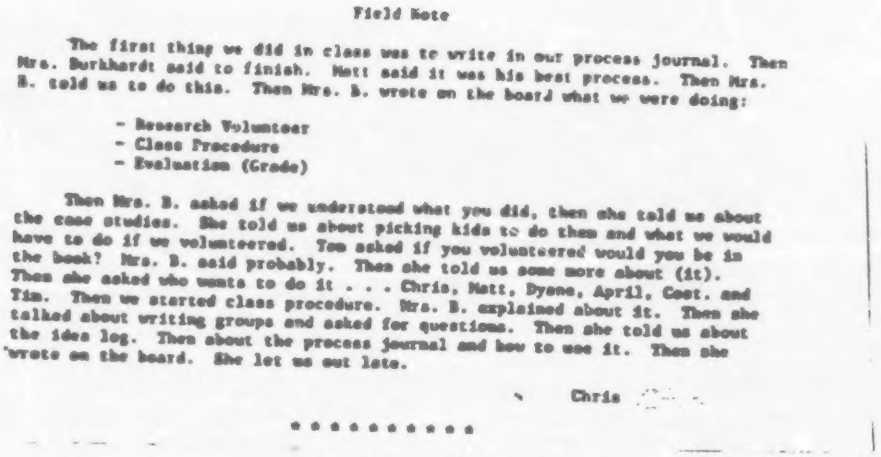
An Innocent Experiment



Field Note

The first thing we did in class was to write in our process journal. Then Mrs. Burkhardt said to finish. Matt said it was his best process. Then Mrs. B. told us to do this. Then Mrs. B. wrote on the board what we were doing:

- Research Volunteer
- Class Procedure
- Evaluation (Grade)

Then Mrs. B. asked if we understood what you did, then she told us about the case studies. She told us about picking kids to do them and what we would have to do if we volunteered. Tom asked if you volunteered would you be in the book? Mrs. B. said probably. Then she told us some more about (it). Then she asked who wants to do it . . . Chris, Matt, Dyene, April, Cost. and Tim. Then we started class procedure. Mrs. B. explained about it. Then she talked about writing groups and asked for questions. Then she told us about the idea log. Then about the process journal and how to use it. Then she wrote on the board. She let us out late.

Chris

* * * * * * * * * * *

This was Chris' attempt to capture in writing what occurred in her 8th grade English class on Friday, October 20th. Chris and the other students in her class were taking field notes as a favor to me since I could not be there that day and I didn't want to miss what was going on.

As the principal investigator of an NIE-funded ethnographic research project documenting how teachers teach writing, I had spent every day since the beginning of school in classes writing down what the teachers and students said and did. When I knew I was going to be away from the district for a day, I was concerned that I not miss "something important." In particular, I knew that this was the day the teacher of this class, Diane Burkhardt, was going to explain in detail about some case study research she planned to do as part of the research project she was working on with me. Seeing my dismay, she responded with a novel idea.

"Why don't I ask the kids to take field notes for you? That way you'll get an accounting - actually 45 accounts - of what I say about the project, case studies and other points."[1]

---

[1] Diane teaches two English and two Social Studies classes. The number 45 is a composite, referring to the total number of students in both English classes.

Diane's suggestion struck me as interesting. It seemed likely that the students would understand this request since they had become accustomed to seeing me write every day in my notebook. They also had, in some small sense, a model for taking field notes since on occasion I had read my field notes to them both as a way of demystifying the notion of my "doing research" and also as a way of adding my voice to theirs when they shared whatever they had been writing with their classmates. Little did I know that by taking this seemingly simple step, not only would I be forcing myself to face some tricky methodological issues about the nature of knowledge in general and the nature of ethnographic research in particular, but I would also be creating a partnership with students and setting up points of reference for myself that extend beyond the traditional teacher-researcher framework.

What's in a Field Note?

According to Michael Agar, field notes are "the record of an ethnographer's observations, conversations, interpretations and suggestions for future information to be gathered" (p. 112). In Lofland's terms, they are "a more or less chronological log of what is happening, to and in the setting and to and in the observer" (p. 104). Schatzman and Strauss recommend sorting field notes according to whether they constitute "Observational Notes, Theoretical Notes, or Methodological Notes" (p. 99). However, none of these cool descriptions adequately conveys the dilemna faced by researchers whenever they enter the settings they plan to study. Immediately confronted with an overwhelming amount of competing stimuli, researchers are faced with making choices - what to write down, what to omit, and how to select. The field notes of the students who were so innocently enlisted in this task suggest many of the solutions researchers themselves have devised and point as well to a number of crucial problems.

Rather than summarize the students' observations, I thought it would be useful to look at five of their field notes in their entirety.

* What I Think

1. Mrs. B., "I would like us to sit down and write a little process about last night."

2. Everyone wrote much longer than expected (1 page or 2 at most).

Mrs. B. wants volunteers for (she stumbles) write on board.

BLACKBOARD

- Research Volunteers
- Class Procedures
- Evaluation
-

She talks about evaluation.

Mrs. B. Explaining how Sondra's job works, what Mrs. B. has to do for Sondra, plus B's case studies on one or two students. She has to write a case study. Mrs. B. wants to pick case study student. Mrs. B. "In a sense, I do a case study on everyone."

CASE STUDY!

She wants to video tape, compose out loud, no more writing but more time (not much more work). Mrs. B. "I dosent [don't think] we will live together."

* Me (too much work) for me.

Real intense process. Mrs. B. "Who is interested in volunteering?" (Mrs. B. jokes around leaning forward in chair — as usual) she wants to talk about procedure — she wants us to hand in stories in box — (she hands box to Puglisi to pass around the class.)

PROCEDURE

She checks book and grade. She gets pieces xeroxed. She takes one in folder — she keeps one — we go to writing groups — she listens to tapes while looking at our pieces. Mrs. B. "Any questions about that?" She wants nice neat records. She wants us to write in Idea Log a lot.

* Me. I can't stand doing writing.

__________________ to be for stories. She wants us to do more process journal whenever we write she wants us to write process this is tiring writing part of English grade.

I can't write field notes!

Tom

* * * * * * * * * * *

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Research
Procedural
Evaluation

We came into class. Hello!!! We began to right process in our process journal about the story we had to had doon by Friday. # handed in, quality of your work on these pieces, Process Journal entries, wrighting group practicepation. We talk about wrighting groups, wrighting folder, process journal. She discussed all of the above and we learned how much we had to have for a good grade.

Billy

* * * * * * * * * * *

We sat down, wrote a process for last night's story. Everyone got down to work. Mrs. Burkhardt finished first and she said we should finish soon. Matt didn't want to stop. He said he was writing the best process he ever wrote. Mrs. Burkhardt was explaining our grade. I overheard Mike A. say he can't do it. He having a hard time. Maybe other people are also. Mrs. B. explaining. Mrs. B. explaining case study. I can't really understand.

Jeff

* * * * * * * * * * *

Field Notes to Sondra

We sat down and Mrs. B. said write a process to the story you wrote last night. In the middle, Mrs. B. said is everybody done and I said "Not yet. I'm writing the best process I ever written." Diane D. said, "Yeah, me too." Mrs. B. said let's write field notes to Sondra. Then I said "Can I title it field notes to Sondra?" She said, "Yes." Then Mrs. B. said who wants to volunteer for case studies. I volunteered for case studies. Then Mrs. B. said now for the procedure for handing in pieces. She asked any questions. She talked about Idea Log and process journal. Talked about the minimum. I asked if the minimum is a C. She said no. Then she said "What if the minimum entries are crap?" I asked if she keeps track of the pieces. She said yes.

Matt

* * * * * * * * * *

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Field Notes

I think Mrs. Burkhardt was a little annoyed when some people didn't hand in their process journals. But she's in a decent mood. People aren't really as dead as usually, but I wouldn't say that they were getting into it, as if alive or anything.

I wrote a lot in my process. My toes were cold. The room is cold.

1) Research/Sondra
2) Procedual
3) Evaluation & Grades

Things she wants to talk about

Mrs. B. explained what Sondra Perl is doing here. She does case studies. I think that's interesting. I wouldn't mind doing one on Mrs. B. if I could. She's interesting. I guess I wouldn't mind her doing a case study on me. Seth, Kristen and Kathy asked some questions. I was too involved in writing notes than asking questions. Hank is showing a movie and it's annoying. Video game — sounds like.

To find out about our composing process — that's what a case study is. Took down names of volunteers. About six — needs only two or three.

Procedure: Then Mrs. B. talked about procedure for handing this in.

Talked about what she wants in process. I guess I'm doing it decent so far. Last year I had trouble — went off track.

How she keeps track - xerox - If no piece - what means - no check, no xerox - no piece in writing group - mess things up. She gets perturbed.

1. drafts
2. Process - uses - what she wants in it and how often
3. handing in pieces on time - not on your own

Evaluation - grades

Writing grades

1. # of pieces — 3 + 2 letters — pieces - minimum
2. Quality of work in these pieces
3. Process — minimum
4. W.C. participation

test
BT
literature — S.T. books

People weren't that dead today. The film next door stopped, but we could hear Allendorph trying to speak Italian or Spanish. It's pretty annoying. I'm glad she explained this stuff to us. It helped me. Sort of relieved me because I know how she grades, and I really don't have to worry about it too much. I think the class likes Mrs. B.

Margaret

* * *

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3-14

Reading through the students' field notes, I am struck by the range and style of the writing. About half of the 45 students do what Chris does: a chronological rendering, mainly in full sentences with a lot of "and then's" stringing the narrative along. A careful reading of all of their entries, however, indicates some interesting differences. For example, a quiet student named Dyane (not included here) focuses entirely on what the teacher says; student remarks are absent from her piece. Chris, a socially oriented, gregarious girl, notices and includes which students said what and who volunteers as case studies.

Only one student makes an elaborate outline, although a handful use brackets to separate the major areas of discussion as well as phrases and direct quotes to illustrate what was said. Many students devise a numbering or lettering system to refer to the different areas of discussion; few evaluate as Scott does (not included here); "Went very fast. But very thorough."

Tom is the only student to draw a diagram of the blackboard and to include descriptions of Diane's physical position (i.e., "Mrs. B. jokes around leaning forward in her chair"). While not the only student to use direct quotes, he excels in separating and drawing attention to his own opinions as distinct from the classroom activity. He does so through asterisks, boxes, and circles; another student Kathy (not included here) draws arrows and includes personal language almost as notes to herself (i.e., "I should get my tail moving and write more"; "Phew! Writing groups won't be graded").

Billy, a less skilled writer, chooses to summarize what he sees. It is interesting that other than his "hello!!" he keeps himself out of the description, focuses on "how much we had to have for a good grade" and concludes by saying, "she discussed and we learned." Jeff, a verbal student and a class leader, focuses primarily on what is happening to other students, particularly boys, and wonders how many others resemble him and Mike, who are unable to understand.

Some students resolve the audience issue the way Chris does, by writing to me, not for me. Matt invents a title, "Field Notes to Sondra." However, while he thinks of them as something akin to a letter, his focus is primarily on himself. A strong class participant and well-liked by everyone, his notes indicate that he is quite aware of what he says and what he does, interestingly, almost to the exclusion of everyone else.

Finally, Margaret's field notes indicate an ability to reflect and a consciousness of mood and atmosphere that we often assume adolescents are incapable of. Unlike Matt, she notices that she's "too involved in writing to participate at all." She records her perception of Diane's mood and the mood of the group, as well as her reaction to the temperature and the distractions from adjoining classrooms (i.e., "Hank is showing a movie"; "Allendorf is trying to speak Spanish"). She brackets her own sidetracks, devises a system for numbering discrete items and for abbreviating names and subjects. And throughout she monitors not only the room and the group, but also herself -- with honesty and voice.

After reading the students' field notes, Diane records her reaction in her teaching journal, a log of her thoughts and perceptions about teaching which forms another part of the data set in our study:

> The in-school part of this day ends with me reading the field notes written by the kids. Most bring a smile--some because of how little they have written...others because of how much. ...I love the ones who use Diane or Di to refer to me (their model was Sondra's notes I guess).

3-16

> A few try to say something about my mood or the classroom atmosphere...others inject their own opinion or notes of humor. I marvel at what gets written down and what doesn't. Can anyone who wasn't here ever know what goes on?

Ethnographic Notetaking

Diane's question is one those of us involved in ethnographic research constantly wrestle with. Our job is to be participant-observers: first to observe behavior and to inquire about its meaning (Spradley, 1980); then to grasp its complexities and render them (Geertz, 1973) so that others can come to see what we have seen. How do we do this? Where do we go for guidance? Even if we perform the research tasks well, can we ever convey what really occurs in a classroom? In other words, can descriptions of a process ever be as rich as the process itself?

While I do not have room here to review the literature on ethnographic methods and the ways researchers have resolved these questions, I believe that as these approaches and variations of them make their way into educational settings, both researchers and teachers, practitioners and consumers of this research, need to school themselves in this exciting, messy, human and inexact science. According to David Smith, Director of the Center for Urban Ethnography at the University of Pennsylvania:

> Ethnography is not a skill; ethnography is a perspective. It is a way of knowing and a way of looking....It allows for the discovery and analysis of tangential things...Ethnography because it is inductive starts at the bottom and looks up...Ethnography does not answer questions. Good ethnography raises questions. (1980, p.)

As my research team and I proceed on our three year ethnographic study of the ways teachers in grades 1-12 teach writing, we raise many questions. Since field notes form the basis of so much of the raw data on an ethnographic study, we have been struck by how few people talk about them or share their personal ways of doing them.

Here, briefly, I'd like to raise some of the questions we faced and discuss some of our solutions. In the final section, I will return to a discussion of the writing classroom.

The first question ethnographic researchers face is "What do I write down?" Following quickly is another, "Since I can't write down everything, what do I select?" Even a cursory look at the students' field notes suggests the range of options and competing stimuli, all of which seem important in the beginning of an ethnographic study. Should the ethnographer record conversation verbatim or use paraphrase? Are movements and body postures important? What about the sounds next door? What about spontaneous conversations seemingly not related to the lesson? How do ethnographers keep track of time? Should they? What about the form of the field notes? Should behavior and talk be coded or slotted into an outline or grouped in some other way? Where do ethnographers record their own perceptions and feelings? Can these be separated from observation?

The questions are endless. Answers to them depend primarily on the goals of the study and the interests of the researchers. Our cardinal rule is to get down as much verbatim speech as possible. We know we can add in the setting, sounds, and even body language later on, but that our memory of specific language fades quickly. We keep track of where kids sit and how seating configurations change; we note time spent on writing in class; we keep private journals of our personal reactions to classes and teachers; we also keep an open log where we record perceptions of classroom events and evolving themes.

Yet despite answers and shared procedures, the students' field notes suggest other issues as well. What surprised me the most in studying the students' field notes was the recognition that so much of what they heard and recorded was influenced by their own agendas. Each student brought a personal history into that room that influenced how he or she perceived the classroom events. If this is true of students, isn't it equally true of researchers? Don't we also have preferences and personal themes that direct our looking and thinking and writing? And if we do, are we supposed to put them aside when we enter a classroom and observe? In fact, can we? I find this is a bit like trying to separate the dancer from the dance, or the knower from the known. In fact, this issue raises additional ones: Is the act of knowing personal, and, if it is, can we ever arrive at an objective view of a classroom?

Earlier I described ethnography as messy and human. I did so because in my understanding of it, it is a perspective that grows out of an appreciation for the complexities and varieties of human experience. In my mind those who do it well don't aim to reduce complex phenomena to simple schemes. Rather, they immerse themselves in the setting they are attempting to understand; they look, observe, and write; they reflect and discuss and look again; they count and sort and analyze; and they arrive at interpretations and theories to explain what they see.

But, in the end, they do not claim that their statements or conceptual schemes fully explain what went on; rather, they recognize that the best they can do is bring to life, as novelists do, a version of human experience.

Are good ethnographies, then, like literature? In an important sense, I believe they are. Mead's Coming of Age in Samoa, Malinowski's Argonauts of the Western Pacific, Wylie's Village in the Vaucluse are full of stories. They show us people at work and at play. They show us what matters to these people and how events in their lives turn out. By looking at these people from the inside out, we come to know them and ourselves better.

Good ethnographies, however, are not fiction. They show what real people in real situations do. That's why we take field notes. If we didn't we might as well write about the classrooms we create in our minds or the ones we remember from childhood. The point, however, is that field notes are not enough. What's in a field note is what we, as observers, select. Yet if we want our ethnographies to represent more than our own limited points of view, what are researchers to do?

In our view the dilemna is resolved through dialogue. When we enter a setting, we do not assume that we know what events and actions mean, but rather we attempt to discover what they mean to the people performing them. Our job is to come to understand another's point of view. This can best be done through dialogue. In our study we read our field notes to the teachers. We write together to discover what classroom events mean. We reflect on teaching. We continue to ask questions. We aim to discover patterns. We don't look for the meaning of classroom events in our field notes. Rather, we create the meaning through the transaction that occurs when teachers, researchers, and students share their perceptions with one another. We may have hypotheses or hunches about what things mean, or we may ourselves discover themes that teachers are unaware of. But the excitement of this type of research is that we don't impose them. We share them with the participants and ask them if they see what we see. Together, we arrive at a view of the classroom--one based on shared experience and shared perception.

Back to the Classroom

On Monday, October 23 I returned to Diane's classroom. I was as charmed as she by the kids' field notes and said so. Soon Diane and the kids were back into classwork, and I returned to the role of researcher. Yet something had happened. I was more aware than ever that there were not only two views of the classroom---mine and Diane's---there were 45 additional views. In fact, from that day on, Diane and I began to see the kids as our partners in the research. It was as important to discuss what they thought about a classroom event as it was to agree on what we thought had occurred.

By having students join me as collaborators in the research, my experience was broadened and enriched. Prior to this study, my research had taught me that writing was an active process in which writers constructed meaning; however, I had not yet seen intimately how learning, too, was constructed by the learner. Given the opportunity to talk about their perceptions of classroom events, the students I observed seemed to consider what they were learning in a new light. They came to see my role as researcher as not very different from theirs-we were all learners. Nor did they view their teacher very differently. She, too, was involved in a long process of inquiry, which begins whenever she meets a new group of 45 students, discovering how she and her students will construct together what's to be learned in her classroom.

That students seized the opportunity to become collaborators in the research and that they took their learning and our interest in them seriously was not surprising to me or to Diane. What did surprise us was that they were willing to grapple, long and hard, much as current historians and social scientists do with such questions as what constitutes the nature of evidence.

While such questions which ask us to examine how we know what we know are difficult to answer, they force us to confront directly the nature of knowing and what we think we are doing when we say we are teaching. Had I entered the classrooms I was investigating with a research stance that dictated ahead of time how I would proceed and what I would learn, I might never have arrived at this point. I'm gratified, though, that the journey I am on is not a straight forward one, that it meanders and twists along the way, that it

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leads me to question the nature of what I am doing. Certainly, one thing I have learned: what's in a field note is just the beginning.

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3-23

LOOKING FOR A PLACE TO WRITE:
THREE STUDENTS' VIEWS OF FRESHMAN COMP.

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On a June day in 1983, Audre Allison and I sat, as we often did, in Audre's empty classroom, talking, as we often did, about kids. The kids in question, on this particular day, were former students of Audre's: seniors at Shoreham-Wading River High School, who had taken Audre's 11th grade English course the year before, and were now about to graduate. I knew these kids--some of them at least--nearly as well as Audre did. As a teacher turned researcher, participating in a study of the teaching of writing in Shoreham-Wading River,* I had attended their English classes almost as often as they had. During the school year 1981-82 I had joined their writing groups, looked over their shoulders as they wrote, read their drafts and revisions and notes and journal entries, asked them hundreds of questions about what they were doing; discussed them, for hours, with Audre. It was during that year, too, that Audre and I had formed a partnership, the lines between teacher and researcher often blurring, sometimes disappearing altogether. Audre had shared her students with me. We had observed them together, admired them together, sometimes even taught them together. On that day in June, when they were about to graduate, we were already missing them together.

What, we wondered, would happen to these students ("our" students) when they went to college? Would they continue to write with enthusiasm and passion? Would they bring skills learned in high school to college writing groups? We wanted to know. In a flash of year-end inspiration, we decided to stop wondering and try to find out.

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In June '83 we invited three students, Sue, Dave and Alex, to meet with us from time to time during the following year: to talk and write with us about their experiences in Freshman Comp., and to join us in presenting a panel about these experiences at the spring meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication. The conference was to be held in late March '84, near the end of an academic year that hadn't yet begun; when we planned the session we had no way of knowing just what it was that we would be presenting. But we knew Sue and Dave and Alex; liked them, trusted their judgments, knew we could learn from them. We figured that, as the year went on, we would find the focus of our panel.

And so it turned out, though in ways we could not have predicted. The report that follows draws on students' accounts of their own experiences. It includes statements Sue, Dave and Alex made at the March conference, notes made in preparation for it, and excerpts from letters sent to me by those and other former Shoreham-Wading River High School students. It gives, I hope, a view of Freshman Comp. as these freshmen saw it. And, in answering the questions Audre and I put to one another, raises others we had not thought to ask.

* * *

Freshman Composition, in its various guises (English 101, Expository Writing, Lit. and Comp., etc.) appears in course catalogs as a service to students. Take this course, the description promises, and you will learn to navigate the unfamiliar seas of academic discourse.

Sometimes the student has no choice about it: he or she is tested and assigned to a course or a section; at other times, he or she can choose from among a number of options. Either way, the promise is the same: the course will initiate the student into the mysteries of college English. Students, the course descriptions promise, will learn the conventions of the academic style; beyond that, they will learn to organize their thoughts, express them clearly, and will be able in the future to cope with the demands of writing in other courses.

Sounds good, if a little vague. The question is, are these the things that students actually learn?

Alex, Sue and Dave went to college from a school district in which writing is respected, enjoyed and widely practiced. In Audre's class, as in others, they drafted pieces and revised them, met in writing groups, discussed the process of writing, wrote constantly.

Audre's teaching of English is based on her own deep pleasure in reading and writing--a pleasure she hopes to share with students. "I want kids to know the joy of writing," she wrote once in her teaching journal, "--to know that it is something they can do for themselves, that real writing is a way of knowing themselves and their world--the power of writing for sheer pleasure and for energetic purpose."

For Audre, as a teacher and as a writer herself, the pleasure in writing comes from discovering what you want to say and finding a voice in which to say it--your own individual voice, as personal as your own vision of the world. It comes, she says, "through surprising yourself with what you find you know--through making your own order out of your own chaos--through creating new experiences and re-creating past experiences--through finding that you have said something that others enjoy or find interesting or useful." Her classroom is set up as a community of writers, each helping the others to find, create and clarify meaning; as Alex put it later, "how to discover meaning we can believe in." And then to express that meaning so that others will be able to understand it, be convinced or moved by it.

In planning her curriculum, Audre looks first to her own needs as a writer: for space, time, and encouragement. She gives her students plenty of all three. She wants them to write wherever they feel comfortable, to take as much time as they need to draft and revise their pieces, to be able to count on supportive responses from their peers as well as from their teacher. She writes with her students, sharing the struggle. She has patience. She doesn't expect skill in writing to develop overnight, but rather slowly, as an outgrowth of students' concern for what they write and confidence in their ability to write it. And she studies, with her students, the writing process itself: what each student is doing as a writer, how it compares to what other students (and Audre and published writers) do, what helps and what doesn't.

Sue, Dave and Alex were among the students in Audre's classes who, as they wrote, came to see writing as writers do. They struggled comfortably with the complex processes of drafting and revision, laughed and argued and helped each other in writing groups, became aware of their own patterns and needs as writers. They were very different from one another, as writers and as people, but alike (and like many of the other students in Audre's classes) in that, by the end of their high school years, they had come to see writing as central to their lives.

When I described them to an audience at the CCCC conference, it was as Audre and I had described them to one another, as we sat over coffee in Shoreham-Wading River High School, during their 11th and 12th grade years.

Alex

There is a theme--a central story--that appeared again and again in Alex's writing as she finished high school and went on to college. A quiet, obedient girl or woman (sometimes a child, sometimes Alex herself), who has let other people tell her what to do all her life, at some point claims her self: begins to listen not only to the voices of authority but also to her own inner voices, and quietly but firmly takes control of her own life. I think that's also what happened to Alex as a writer during her 11th grade year.

Alex was a successful student to begin with. She entered 11th grade with a record of top marks and a reputation for academic excellence, especially in science. Most of her success she owed to a fine mind, an ability to concentrate, and a willingness to work. But some, as she realized herself, came from her expert hand with the school game. "I'd spend the first few weeks figuring out what the teacher wanted," she said later, "and the rest of the year giving it back to him or her." And it worked; there were all those A's to prove it.

But something else was brewing that year, something in Alex struggling to break out of the "good student" mold, and Audre came at the right time for her. For Audre wouldn't play the game. "She changed the rules!" said Alex, later; laughing, looking back. Alex would go to her, between classes, during classes, after school, trying to find out what she was supposed to be doing in English this year: what to write about, how to write about it, what Audre's idea of a good paper was. But Audre wouldn't tell her. She would listen, summarize what she had heard, ask questions, but steadfastly refuse (as she did with all her students) to make decisions about subject matter, style, structure. "You are the writer," she would say. "It's up to you."

It was frustrating for Alex at first. Audre wouldn't even tell her what words to cut out of her pieces, and Alex was beginning to suspect she needed to cut. At the beginning of 11th grade, she had swallowed a whole vocabulary list, and only partly digested it; her pieces were topheavy with exotic new words some of which practically begged to be cut: "condign," "longanimity," "fraught with adumbrations." But Audre stood firm. "This sentence puts a strain on me as a reader" was the farthest she would go in helping Alex decide what to discard, but no farther. What words remained was a decision she insisted on leaving in the writer's hands. "I've never understood teachers who say, 'Cut out all that garbage,'" she told me once. "It takes the learning away from the student."

So Alex, unwillingly at first, and confused and frustrated, began to make her own decisions. And found she could. And in doing so released powers she had never known she had. She found a new, strong voice, clearly her own; began to explore new forms (poetry, for instance, which she had been convinced she couldn't write) and new uses for writing. She'd always kept diaries; now she explored issues in her life through fiction as well. She found she could write to discover as well as to display knowledge; kept reading logs and science journals, wrote her way through a substantial piece of research in biochemistry which eventually led to a major scholarship. She began to ask her writing group not to direct her but to help her clarify her own thinking: "Sometimes I use their suggestions and sometimes not," she reported. "This helps because it forces me to make my own decisions." She decided that, whatever else she did, she would always write.

By spring of her junior year she was able to write, at the end of what turned out to be a prize-winning essay for an NCTE contest,

> . . . My writing is mine. I may never produce a television commercial or lay eyes on a film set. Yet I will always be able to grab a pencil and a scrap of paper to mold my thoughts into words upon the written pages. They may take the form I choose and the tone I select, after all they reflect me. I may seem over protective, perhaps even arrogant about the individuality of my writing. Yet it is the only thing in todays often alientating society which insures me that I may protect myself, the individual and her thought. For writing is truly an art of the individual. It will and must remain and thrive. As long as we continue to think freely we must write for only as long as we write may we hope to continue to think freely.

Sue

I first noticed Sue because her voice came through so clearly in everything she wrote. There would be a flash of humor in a piece, an original twist, a telling detail, a way of seeing the world so completely hers that you'd know who wrote the piece even if it had no name on it. "Gregory idolized Batman and Robin so much that he named his gerbils after them. The fat gerbil was Batman and the gerbil that Gregory cut the tail off of was Robin . . . ." "Stanley [Kowalski] seems like this really street smart tough guy . . . ." "Several scrappy teenage street kids . . . lean against the doors that have a painted sign in bright fluorescent orange letters, 'Do Not Lean Against These Doors' . . . ." I wanted to hear more of this voice, so I hung around, and became fascinated by Sue's wonderfully messy and wonderfully effective writing process.

Sue rewrote extensively, even at the beginning of 11th grade. Her first drafts, she felt, were "rambling" and "ungrammatical"--the last a consequence of her having only recently become interested in writing. As a child, she said, she had been "too busy playing" to pay much attention to it. But now she was interested, and willing to work, and she tore into her drafts with energy and enthusiasm, moving sentences around, deleting whole sections, cramming new ones into the margins of her pages, writing notes to herself about what she wanted to do next--all in a bold, messy, confident scrawl that seemed to match her personal style.

For Sue is active, a doer, a natural-born leader; she takes the initiative in all aspects of her life. In her last two years of high school she was involved in just about everything happening in the school community. She ran herself, or had a large hand in running, the high school student government, its newspaper, its softball team, a student-run writing center, a community service project, and half a dozen other things I never could keep track of. But she could, and did, and handled them all well.

She revised her drafts as she managed all of her various projects: with determination and humor, getting a lot of fun out of it all, but also getting the job done. In writing she knew, usually, where she was going, and usually had a rough idea of how to get there. "This part is about something else," she'd say, moving a paragraph. "It doesn't belong here." Or, "This part doesn't sound like me; better throw it out." At the beginning of 11th grade, as she pointed out to me, her changes were mainly improvements of what was there: sharpening focus, smoothing out tone; by 12th grade she was revising more drastically: changing the focus of a piece, rethinking it entirely.

In her writing group, she encouraged others to experiment, to revise boldly, as she did. "Why don't you take a chance on it?" she would ask. She would move the group along, encouraging exploration and "What if . . . ?" questions at the beginning of work on a piece, concentrating on improving what was there towards the end. "At some point you have to stop asking 'What if?'; otherwise you'd never finish." She was always careful, however, to leave decisions in the hands of the writer. Giving advice to members of a writing group, she wrote, "Never be condescending or mean. . . . Ask questions. . . . Be honest, if you can't understand say so, say what you think but understand you aren't in charge."

When Sue left high school she liked to write. She would revise and revise until a piece pleased her, and then fight for it if necessary. She knew when her writing was good, and enjoyed sharing it with others. Of the fifth draft of a piece she'd worked hard on, she wrote, "I think this is one of the most interesting pieces I've written. I have fun reading it. It makes other people happy. I'm proud that I was able to do what I set out to do."

The summer before she went off to college, Sue quit a summer job she'd hated, and sat down to write about it. Her account, lively and funny and (in the end) serious, covered seven typed pages, which she revised, read to a friend, and eventually sent off to Audre and me--because she knew we would enjoy it. She left for college on her feet as a writer. We figured she'd be okay.

Dave

I first noticed Dave not because of his own writing but because of the way he responded to other people's. He'd deal with a writer's feelings, directly and without embarrassment. "You felt sad when . . . ," he'd say, or "You must have been scared . . . ." While other students hesitated, or commented on surface aspects of a piece, Dave would go straight for its emotional center.

Once, when his writing group was discussing the difficulty of putting feelings on paper, someone said it was hard to write about love. "It sounds mushy--like a Hallmark greeting card." Dave said, in the serious and unself-conscious manner I came to know and respect, "I don't see anything wrong with Hallmark greeting cards. If writing can bring out someone's feelings and their thoughts and they can think about stuff, then that's good."

Dave's own best writing was often private, written for himself alone. He would take his journal to the beach, or to the woods, and write. He'd think things over, by writing about them, and record his observations of the world in careful, precise detail, sometimes shot through with glints of a sharp sarcasm the world seldom saw. Attending an evening meeting of adults in the community, for instance, he wrote notes to himself: ". . . The end of the meeting draws near. Looks of relief appear on most faces . . . People straighten their papers and their postures . . . have false looks of interest on their faces as they doodle on their calendars and click their pens . . . First one person swings back and forth in his chair, then almost like an orchestra everyone repeats the motion. It looks ridiculous . . . ." Very little of this writing ever surfaced in class. I came to know about it only because I came to know Dave himself. Sometimes, if I asked, he would lend me his journal, or the folder of miscellaneous writings he kept in his desk, but in general he tended to assume that what he wrote for himself would not be of interest to anyone else.

When Dave brought work to class, he often left out just that richness of detail and reflection that gave his journal pieces life. The other members of his writing group would ask him questions about the thinking behind the brief and abstract pieces he read to them, and urge him to put more of it down on paper. As the year went on, he sometimes did. Once he wrote a poem based on a journal entry I had admired, and entered it in the high school's poetry contest. Another time he used an experience recorded in his journal as the basis of a fictionalized account of a trip he'd taken. With his group's support, and Audre's, he began to play with forms: to mix fact with fiction, to play with different voices. And, more and more often, he brought his work to class.

He didn't revise much, even at the end of the year, nor did he always finish pieces he'd started, but he was always a helpful responder to other people's writing, responding thoughtfully but with respect for the writer's authority. "You should--" he began one day, but stopped himself. "No--I can't tell you what you should do. But maybe you might . . . ." He thought deeply about his writing and other people's, and always wrote--though not always for school.

The following year, when he was a senior, I'd see him in the halls, and ask him, "What have you been writing in your English class?"

"Oh, nothing much," he'd say. "I'm not doing so good in there." Then he'd reach into the back pocket of his jeans and pull out a much-folded scrap of notebook paper. "But I wrote this poem last weekend-- You want to see it?"

[NOTE: For the flavor of the students' high school writing, see p. _______.]

In the second year of our study, Sue, Dave, and Alex, although they were no longer in Audre's class, continued to work with us. They travelled with Audre and me and other teachers, researchers, and students to teachers' conferences at which they discussed their experiences as writers. They read articles and sometimes books on the writing process. They read and commented (sometimes in writing) on my research reports. They became, in short, active and valued members of our research team.

Writing had become important to them, an activity--like sports, student government, community service--that spilled over the boundaries of "just school." As seniors, they wrote both in and alongside their regular English courses. Alex kept an unassigned science journal, notes on her reactions to paintings and sculpture, an extensive reading log; she entered essay contests, poetry contests, sent editorials to local newspapers. Often Sue joined Audre and Vanessa Rickerby, Sue's journalism teacher and Audre's friend, to discuss writing; sometimes they met as a writing group during free periods. All three students responded to events in their world as other writers do: by writing about them. The local Woolco closed; Sue and her brother Jim described its last days in a funny, offbeat piece for the school newspaper. A teenager from school crashed his car on the highway; Dave wrote a poem about it. Alex's notebooks multiplied. The folder in Dave's desk fattened. Writing had become part of their lives.

When they went to college--Sue and Alex to large, Ivy League universities, Dave to a small, church-affiliated college--they registered, like other freshmen, for English. In their awareness of their own writing processes, and of writing process theory, they were perhaps different from other college freshmen; in other ways, very similar to the other students in their classes. It is from this double perspective--of, on the one hand, typical college freshmen and, on the other, of students unusually familiar with the study of writing process--that they observed their first college writing courses.

Alex

Alex, in her enthusiasm for writing, signed up for not one but two writing courses in her first term at college: Intro. to Greek Lit. and Creative Writing.

In her words:

> I love writing and I love writing at [my college]. There are things one can do to make writing a means of self-realization rather than a chore. It is all too easy to tell students that you want to see excellent grammar, a thesis statement and a conclusion. To be sure all this is crucial, but to become bogged down in it is to drown the pleasure of writing and of exploration . . . Often our professor complains of students with perfect form and no ideas. This is one problem I don't have . . . .

In my literature class I had to develop a style for literary criticism, but let me emphasize that I had to develop this, no one forced it on me like cough syrup. To be certain it was a struggle but the professor understood this, discussed my problems in style with me. I had to work on coherence and clarity. He illustrated where and how I could improve, then set me out again. With each paper I felt a growing confidence, an increased security in my writing . . . .

My professor never lost sight of the fundamental reason why I was writing. This was a chance for me to explore Greek literature. Each week, regardless of whether or not there was a paper due we wrote a short response to the week's reading. Nothing major, no big deal but we kept writing and got feedback. For me continuing to write was an important part of the transition. It is so easy to set writing on the back burner, especially when time is so valuable a commodity . . . .

Creative Writing, a pass-fail course, I am told is a luxury.

I was really fortunate to get into this class. Six of us, and a professor, everyone a writer. I felt at home and comfortable right away. We met at 10 PM. Everyone read everyone else's work. Everyone was considerate, we were all open to the same vulnerability. We just signed up to write, and sat around, and talked about writing with other writers. The atmosphere was supportive, but fear not, by the end of the semester, criticisms flew in from all fronts. Yet listeners were eager [to hear] my revisions. I had to write, and they had to write . . . It worked well.

My professors gave me a great deal of respect from day one, they expected a lot in return. They considered me to be at a certain level of maturity. They gave me the benefit of the doubt. They knew it wasn't going to come out in a day--maybe not even a week. They let me write and then we evaluated (a process where I was involved every step of the way) and I began again. They trusted me. They let me loose. . . .

I'm exploring new styles and voices. I used to aim for the short, concise, powerful, slightly dramatic sentence. Lately, I've found myself becoming an old storyteller. I want to entertain. My stories are becoming longer, exaggerated, and more detailed. For now this is what I like. Maybe I won't tomorrow. For now, I like it and I like that I'm able to explore.

Sue

Sue was looking forward to writing in college, but she was also a little apprehensive about it. She thought college teachers "would have different expectations . . . and perhaps be a bit more demanding." She knew she would need to learn new forms. She signed up for a course in Expository Writing, designed for freshmen, in order, she wrote later, to get "the support I needed to learn to write literary criticism etc."

The course, as it turned out, was not what she had expected it to be. The following excerpts from her notes on the class (scrawled in the margins of her drafts, on odd pages in her notebook, on the back of class assignment sheets, and in letters) tell the story. They appear unedited, just as she wrote them.

> September 19
>
> End of the first full week----we've written 4 brief essays.
>
> People are saying they don't feel the same about their papers when they come back with marks and comments all over it.
>
> I think Professor A wants us to improve technique more than anything. That must be why we are using the Oxford Guide Text. [The first pieces we've written] are short, but amazingly filled with grammatical errors, and she points all of them out. The grades given are based on technical/mechanical success. Not too much back on ideas/style yet. This is expository! Actually, the interview is where we'll probably talk about style, etc.
>
> September 27
>
> Today I had my interview with Professor A. I was very upset afterwards . . . I wanted to cry. Mostly because I can't read this woman. She said the papers I was handing in were first drafts. I said we only have time for first drafts because the assignments are practically overnight.
>
> She said I ought to have a little more respect for the reader and I should make an effort even when I write first drafts for my sentences to be coherent and correct. I told her my prime

concern is not grammar after my first try at something. I don't like to get hung up on that, I make a note "come back to this" or something or I know mentally that it is wrong and it bothers me but I want to keep writing.

She also mentioned that I wasn't taking the writing assignments seriously. How serious am I supposed to take a 1-2 page narrative or description piece?

She looked at my draft for the big 3-5 page paper and said looks like this will need a few drafts. She's kidding me, right? Of course it needs drafts.

Early October

Lecture on sentences and word choices. No one is paying attention. Not one person read the Oxford Guide chapters . . . .

She lectured the entire period . . . nobody was listening.

I am positive that no one gets anything from these lectures.

Oct. 19

She is picking out students pieces and reading parts to show the problems most of us have. She just ripped apart this football players piece because it was chronologically out of order and confusing. Another paper had a parallel construction problem. Mostly everyone's stuff is pretty vague because they haven't thought about it much, or maybe that's just me. Lots of people "borrow" handy words to describe something without making it clear. I like to think of them as inflated words. [picture of balloon in margin]

Oct. 24

Molly is dying right now. Professor A is reading her paper as an example. Molly is never asked about it, or what she means if something is unclear. Professor A is telling us "if I were Molly I would have"--her suggestions which would've made this paper better. I don't think this is very fair to Molly.

Early November

We tried writing groups today. Prof. A pulled up a chair to my group. We were listening to Bill's piece, The Storm. I asked Bill lots of open ended questions to find out how he felt about this piece. He really liked it . . . At first he was shy about reading but towards the end he read with no hesitancy. Yes, even confident [Ivy League] students are sometimes shaky . . . let's see, Prof. A made comments like, "If it were my piece, I'd . . . . . ." which is groovy, respect for ownership and all, but of course if the teacher says "If it were me" you are going to change it her way for the grade.

Late November

I don't think Professor A is supportive with her criticism.

She never points out anything good about my papers, so I never know what I am supposed to be doing, only what I'm not . . . . .

I don't like getting back papers that have comments like, "a better word is . . . . ." suggesting that her way is better or The Way, The Word to Choose, or else it is wrong.

By now I feel like I only know how to revise two ways (1) with my crummy sentences or (2) her sentences (which will get me the better grade because it is better) but I never understand on my own why my sentences are bad, only that hers are better.

At this point, I am really sick of English. I don't know why I can't write well, I don't know why I can't see mistakes, and I've just spent three months not improving and getting more frustrated by the paper.

At the end of the term

Expository Writing . . . . . I hated it. It was a step backwards for me.

Reflecting on her experience in the course, Sue said simply, "It tore me apart." She added,

> Freshmen . . . are at a very delicate and sensitive point in their lives . . . Teachers have a lot of power, especially in that first semester, and especially in English classes. In my case my English teacher pulled the rug out from underneath me and it's taking me a long time to recover. By Christmas break I no longer knew how to write a good sentence, no less an entire paper and this effected me in all of my other courses. . . . My English class confused me and shook my confidence as a writer . . . By the end of the semester I felt I had no voice . . . I was afraid to write . . . couldn't attack things . . . felt I didn't know what I was talking about and couldn't get it right if I tried. I didn't want to write anymore . . . I looked for support in this class, but that's not what I got. . . . Before going to college I was prepared for what other students describe as a "rude awakening," but never something as personal as this.

Dave

When Dave got to college, he was given a placement test and assigned to a section of English 101. As he put it,

> The purpose of my freshman English was to make sure that all of the students had mastered the fundamental skills of English. My teacher wanted to be sure the students had learned what they should have in high school.
>
> Most of the writing was analysis of literature. . . . The way the assignments were set up, it must have been pretty boring for the professor to read the papers, because they must have all been pretty much the same. . . .
>
> I really didn't learn much from the course. We were instructed on what was expected from our papers. Weeks later, when we got our graded work back, we spent 1/2 of that days class discussing the teacher's satisfaction or dissatisfaction on the collective effort of the class. We never were asked to revise or give any further thought to a piece after it had been graded, but most of the stuff I didn't want to look at again anyway . .
>
> I was not disappointed with the course but I did not have very high expectations of it to start with. . . . I took the course to fulfil the requirement. It was just a step on the way to somewhere else.
>
> I wrote the stuff I cared most about for me rather than the course.
>
> The writing I did for English 101 was for the Professor and he was the intended audience. I suppose that writing for a certain target audience is an important and useful skill. Perhaps I like what I write on my own the most because I am the audience, but I really think I write better when it is something I really want to write. The ideal situation for me would be if my target audience was interested in what I wanted to write about, and gave me input on how to revise my writing to bring it closer to its potential. . . . Nobody knows what I'm talking about when I talk about a course that would help you write. They say, "Oh, if you're interested in writing why don't you take journalism?" But that's not what I mean.

* * *

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Before I joined the research project in Shoreham, I taught Freshman Comp. myself, in several of its various guises (Eng. 101, Basic Writing, Intensive Writing), on and off for eleven years. Like most teachers of freshmen, I tended to assume, in the beginning at least, that my students didn't know much about writing when they came to me. I was wrong, of course.

Studying high school students in Shoreham reminded me of what I had gradually come to know as a teacher of college freshmen: that students come to college (as in fact they come to high school) with histories as writers. They are not blank slates. They are not empty vessels, waiting to be filled. They have experience and opinions; sometimes they know better than we do what it is they need in order to take the next steps. But we seldom ask them.

Sue, Dave, and Alex had strengths as writers when they went to college. All three had come to see themselves as writers. While their written products did not always reflect the depth of their knowledge, their processes did: they all knew how to take a piece of writing and make it better, all knew how to use feedback from responders, all were accustomed to making their own decisions about their writing, and all were willing to struggle with a piece, taking it through draft after draft, until it satisfied them.

They wanted in college, and expected to have, support in taking whatever steps would come next: learning new forms, finding new voices, maturing as writers. They hoped for what they had had in high school: time and space to work on their writing, support, encouragement, and above all respect from teachers and peers.

Alex found everything she was looking for, and then some. From the beginning of her college career she was treated like a writer. In her creative writing course, she enjoyed the company and support of other writers, wrote constantly, and revised whatever she wanted to revise. She worked on one story, on and off, for the whole term; eventually won a prize for it. But even in her more traditional literature course, she felt supported and respected by her teachers: they told her what she needed to do, she said, then "set me out again." Like her creative writing teachers, they gave her (in her own words) benefit of the doubt. "They let me loose," she said of both sets of teachers; let loose, she soared. Writing, to her, became a heroic adventure. Pen in hand, she saw herself as powerful, daring, free to explore the world: "a fighter pilot," in her own image, "trying the edge of the envelope." And her writing flourished, and she is proud of it.

Sue, on the other hand, found none of the support she was seeking. In her expository writing course, her hands were tied. There was no time for her to do the things she knew how to do: to revise her writing, to work with other writers, to take a piece through drafts until it satisfied her. And her teacher, in trying to help, ended up getting in the way of Sue's learning. By substituting her own words for Sue's she undercut Sue's strengths as a writer: her sure sense of what worked and what didn't in her own writing, her confidence in her own ear and her own judgment. As the term went on, Sue felt less and less sure of herself as a writer, more confused and shaken--and her writing got worse.

Professor A, Sue thought, saw Sue as "an inept freshman"--one who clearly needed a lot of instruction. And of course there was reason for this. Sue's early papers, like Alex's and Dave's and most freshmen's, show the awkwardness and signs of strain common to anyone learning to write in a new form. Prof. A, in her comments, takes on the job of editor, pointing out weaknesses, rewriting to improve the product. She circles words and phrases, and labels them

— very weak

-- confused focus

-- really a mess

-- careless and imprecise

— a poor, confusing sentence

-- false analogy

-- good amassing of facts but consistently shaky word choice

and (a rare, positive comment): "the one good sentence in this paper."

The very first sentence of Sue's very first piece for the course is bracketed, with a comment as to how it should be changed; words and phrases are rewritten throughout. In her end comment on this paper, Prof. A restates Sue's theme, in a well-turned, elegant sentence that could have been designed to show up Sue's awkward constructions and imprecise word choices. To what purpose? "I never understood why my sentences were bad," Sue said later, "only that hers were better."

By contrast, I have before me a story of Alex's, on which her teacher has written almost nothing. A word questioned here or there, a "good!" in the margin, at one point a whole paragraph marked along the edge: "Alex this is fabulous!" In her end comment, the teacher admits to being confused about a particular incident in the story, but adds, ". . . you held me all the way."

Dave's experience, more typical, I suspect, lies somewhere in the middle. He didn't feel attacked by his English teacher, but didn't feel supported, either. At the beginning of the term, he looked over the course prospectus, evaluated the professor's goals, and decided that this classroom would not prove to be a safe place for writing. So he retreated, and went back to doing what he'd done at the beginning of 11th grade: writing for himself alone, or for a select audience of friends. His English course became, for him, "just a step on the way to somewhere else." He did what he needed to do to get through it, but never gave it more than the topmost layer of his mind or attention. And as a result made no new discoveries, and extended very little his scope as a writer.

Dave's experience is echoed in reports from other Shoreham-Wading River High School graduates. Theresa, a nursing student now in her second year at a small New England college, began to write freely in Len Schutzman's 12th grade English class in Shoreham. After three terms of English in college, she wrote me,

> . . . Thank God I'm finally done with English courses. I took lit and comp, lit and philosophy, and world lit. I hated every one!
>
> Lit and comp was the only one that involved supposed creative writing. What a joke! The class was basically literature. The only emphasis on writing was the grade! We never once shared our writing, and writing was never discussed by Dr. B__, the instructor. My writing was usually ripped to shreads which got me extremely disgusted. My effort towards writing eventually diminished. . . . I think that writing can be a personal risk that many instructors are not aware of. As a result [of these classes], I no longer open up in my writing, I'm much more inhibited, put forth very little effort and don't really care about what I write. All that matters is that I pass the course. "Why?" you may ask--because my writing will only get ripped apart and the real meaning or intention of the work is ignored or criticized. So why try or take that "personal risk"?

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Enclosed in her letter were papers from the course, to illustrate her point. They are covered with the professor's comments: "awk," "poorly phrased," etc. "These essays were done with a great deal of inhibition," Theresa noted. "Good thing I wasn't completely open!"

"If your confidence has been ripped off and stomped on," said Dave, "you don't want to write."

Teresa, another student of Len's, took her first college writing courses at a local community college, then transferred to a branch of the state university. The comments below come from letters and from notes for a talk she gave to teachers at the Nov. '82 meeting of NCTE.

> Since I have entered college I have not had a course that cuts through the muck and drudgery of the work involved to reach a final piece. . . .
>
> In my freshman comp class we sat with backs against the wall. No one spoke much. The only times we shared writing were when the teacher picked her favorite. . . . My freshman comp teacher was more concerned with clarity than with the content of my work. She set up the mold that we were to place our words into: comparison and contrast, illustration, topic sentence with three subtopic sentences . . . I felt like these steps were backwards. I don't know when I start a piece what form it is going to take. The only way I can shove my words into specific guidelines is to pick very bare, basic topics. . . .
>
> At college writing is hard without a group. I only get one little piece of feedback--the grade. I want more. I need positive feedback . . . I could get an "F" but knowing she liked content or word choice or something would be nice . . . I want to know not only [if it's a] nice sentence or bad, want to know what she got out of my meaning, my excitement or sadness about something . . . Writing takes work, and personal giving. You put yourself on the line when you write . . . You let people see a pretty big slice of you. . . . I need to know that my teachers understand my intent, my meaning. Then when I am excited about my work I learn voluntarily and quickly about form and grammar.
>
> The teaching of writing . . . goes much deeper than spelling. . . . You can find out who you are at the tip of a plastic ballpoint pen . . . Do most teachers know this even exists?

"Backs against the wall." Lectures on writing. An emphasis on form, not content; product, not process. An atmosphere in which "the real meaning or intention of the work is ignored or criticized." No wonder Dave retreated. No wonder Dave, and many like him, protect themselves from attack. But the protective shell Dave drew around himself leads, in Theresa's word, to "inhibition," to a decrease in investment in and concern for writing. And Dave is still looking for a course that will "help him write."

When Audre's students, before they graduated, asked Audre and me, nervously, if they would find in college the support for writing they had found in high school, we assured them, with confidence, that they would. Writing process work was spreading all over the country, we told them. We quoted from articles in CCCs, about writing groups in college classrooms, about writing centers and peer tutoring and conferencing techniques. Why, you'll probably have writing groups in Freshman Comp., we said. But few of Audre's students now in college have found that to be true. As one told us, bitterly, "There is no such thing as a writing group in college." And few have heard, from teachers, the questioning tone that encourages exploration in writing.

* * *

I don't believe there are villains in Freshman Comp. Most--probably all--teachers want to help their students learn. The volumes of red or blue ink on Sue's and Theresa's papers attest to long hours and careful thought on the part of their teachers. Yet the effect of their teachers' efforts on Sue and Theresa (and on Dave and on how many others?) has been the opposite of what was intended: the students have become confused, discouraged; their writing shows no improvement. Only Alex is flourishing--and other students keep telling her she has been very, very lucky.

How did this happen? Part of it, I think, has to do with differences in the definition of teaching writing.

What is it we are trying to do when we teach writing? In particular, in this case, when we teach Freshman Comp.? How do we see our jobs? Do we see ourselves as evaluators, as facilitators, as editors, as fellow writers? How do our students think we see ourselves?

Dave's teacher, in Dave's view at least, seems to see himself as in the business of certifying competence. He wants to make sure, before his students pass on to upper level courses, that they have learned "what they were supposed to in high school." His students write, and he evaluates; comments, as Dave describes it, on "his satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the collective effort of the class." He seems to see papers as displays of writing skill--proof that sutdents possess or don't possess certain skills--rather than as steps in a process of acquiring skills. In such a context, the opinions and reactions of peers are irrelevant, and there is no need for or point in revision.

Sue's teacher (like Theresa's and many others) seems to confuse teaching students with editing texts. She writes well herself, and apparently hopes that, when she substitutes her own, improved versions of her students' words and sentences for theirs, or tells them what she, as a writer, would have done with a particular piece, her students will understand what they might have done, and be able to do it better next time.

She is hoping, probably, to transfer her own skill as a writer, acquired over years of writing, to her students. But it doesn't work that way. No teacher can give a student knowledge, as if it were an object to be transferred from one owner to another; the student must make her own.

"A better word is . . ." Most readers would agree that, in most of the sentences Prof. A changed, her word was in fact "better" than Sue's--but not for Sue. Until she found the word herself--chose it herself--it was useless to her. Once in a while a teacher's suggestion comes at a particular moment of ripeness, when a student is ready for it and can learn from it, but not, I think, very often. Each time Prof. A rewrote one of Sue's sentences, the sentence improved, but Sue's confidence in herself as a writer slipped another notch. And her loss of confidence--in her own ability to learn--was reflected in the steady deterioration of her writing. Sue didn't need to have her sentences improved; she needed support in her struggle to untangle them herself. As Audre puts it, "We can't take shortcuts for them. We have to let them reach--and overreach. We have to help them find their own way."

Alex's teachers apparently saw Alex as a fellow writer, struggling, as they struggled themselves, to understand the world through writing. They saw the awkwardness (the "overreaching") in her early papers as the sign of growth it was. When they evaluated her writing, they involved her, as she says, "every step of the way." Like other writers, she was expected to be able to judge her own work and learn from her own mistakes. She was expected to be able to learn from peers, and teach them. And what she was asked to do built on what she already knew.

Teachers of freshmen do not, usually, ask their students what they know. Their knowledge of their students' abilities comes mainly from papers completed and handed in for a grade. But these papers may reflect only a fraction of what students actually know. Sue, Dave, and Alex all came to college with strengths as writers, and knowledge of their own writing processes, but of the three only Alex was given the chance to explain and use what she knew--to build on it. Dave's strengths were ignored, and Sue's were undermined. Dave's and Sue's teachers saw only the imperfections of their students' written products; they missed the potential in the processes behind them.

Does it matter? I think it does. It's not that one course can destroy a student; I don't think it can. Sue, Dave, and Alex came to college thinking of themselves as writers--and they still do. The knowledge and confidence they had acquired in high school served them well; despite setbacks, they have all gone on writing. Dave went underground, but continued to write. Alex kept learning logs even in courses that didn't require them. Sue was shaken, but recovered; even at the lowest ebb of her confidence, she wrote pages and pages of comment on her writing class, and by her second term in college she was organizing informal writing groups among her friends. As Audre once put it, "Writing is so powerful--that once you know what it does for you--you will not let it go."

But Sue and Dave wrote despite their freshman English courses, not because of them. They could have done more, learned more, if they had been, like Alex, "let loose." If their teachers had asked them what they knew, and what they needed to know; what they already knew and what they wanted to learn. And had listened to their answers.

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EXCERPTS FROM THE STUDENTS' HIGH SCHOOL WRITING

From Dave's journal:

I lay on the beach and look upward. I see the stars. My mind is filled with this image, it's infiniteness. It is all I am aware of. There is nothing else.

I turn my head toward the sound. I see the distant lights. They are in another state, over twenty miles away. My mind is filled with all the possible places that the light could be coming from. . . .

I close my eyes. . . . A pebble falls down the bluff. . . . I pick it up. I feel it. It is round. How did it become that shape? I know, from washing around in the surf, but how did it get up on top of the bluff? It must have taken a long time. How long? What difference does it make? Now it is here, back where it belongs, back at the water's edge. . . . To set things right, I throw the rock into the liquid purple abyss.

Sue: from personal essay, "A Day in the Life of . . ."

. . . I had an appointment with the principal to discuss an issue that Student Government was trying to tackle.

After a heated first period of debate on the topic of the unpopular opinionated movie review I had written for Journalism, I raced down to the principal's office in order to be prompt . . .

I perched myself on the sofa in the waiting room, organizing the agenda and dreaming of the cheese cake the principal always offers at his meetings. I waited impatiently for 20 minutes when finally his secretary entered the room to inform me that no one knew when the principal would be returning to his office, or where he was at the moment. I was angry that I had been stood up by even a principal.

I decided to make use of the remaining time and went to speak to some teachers about a new Writing Center project we were trying to organize. Suddenly the principal walked in and interrupted us to announce that he had spent the last five minutes trying to track me down in order to apologize for missing our meeting. I accepted without hostility, so he helped himself to the last chunk of our bagel, and with a mouthful tried to say goodbye.

Alex: from description of a ruined monastery, "A Silent Place"

. . . Perhaps the taunting silence lured them. For when one stands at last perfectly still, the air cleared from the echoes of crackling undergrowth, the abundance of life tantalizes the straining ear, holding its breath as insects furrow through the rich humus and a distant elk crunches the needle bed. All in a tune so poignant and serene that even the most gifted flutist would fail to capture it . . . .

Here it was then, that they chose to lay the bricks. Heaved on one another they must have once outlined an ascetic structure. A monastery laid with the greatest care, cloistered miles from villages. . . .

. . . As the bricks settled they began to crumble. A covering of moss encroached upon the rubble, polishing the edges. I have seen their place once. Many of the walls still stand tall, others are dust sprinkled over the needles in the courtyard. . . .

Weaving through the stones I prepare to leave. I find a chip of brick. Holding it in my palm I see how scratched and bruised it is. Nevertheless, the core is hard. I place it back on the ground, not taking what is theirs. After all, I am only a visitor.

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Characteristics of Successful Writing Instruction: A Preliminary Report

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After a year of observing and participating in the classrooms of four of the teachers who took part in our study,[1] of getting to know these teachers and students, of taking field notes, of videotaping and tape-recording students at writing, of interviewing school and community members, it is useful to stop and take notice midjourney and to consider what we have learned about these classrooms. What themes and patterns are emerging from the data we are gathering?

As a point of departure for addressing these questions, I would like to use the teachers' articles included in this issue—to build from what they have to say. From these articles I shall discuss a few techniques we see these teachers utilizing in their classrooms. To do so I will draw on my field notes and the four teachers' teaching journals to corroborate what we have learned about the ways they teach writing. However, our efforts to describe the teaching of writing are tentative and exploratory because the research is still in progress. Nevertheless, there are a few behaviors I consistently observed in these four classrooms where process approaches to the teaching of writing are being studied.

Taking cues from students

These teachers conduct instruction in part according to their students' interests. They listen to students and act on what they hear. When Jack Schwartz learns Erika is keeping a "home journal," he asks her to read something from it to her classmates during journal sharing time. He hopes by her example to encourage others to extend their enjoyment of journal writing; what he discovers is that almost a dozen second graders have already initiated their own versions of at-home journals. Kirsten says, for example, "I keep two diaries at home. One I can bring in, but the other one has two locks. It has very private things in it!" Later in the week, Jack notes in his journal: "Today Cathy brought in a journal from

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home. In it she had written a great story. It had a really unique plot in a fairy tale format. I believe that one of my main objectives for the year—the sense of writing as an activity to be done whenever and wherever desired—is coming through. Those kids who keep these journals and other writing at home are helping me convey that the writing can be an enjoyable, self-chosen activity outside of the classroom."

Writing about dinosaurs was a frequent activity in Reba Pekala's first-grade classroom. It began in October when David and Craig checked out dinosaur books from the library. Both traced dinosaur figures, copied names of different species into their own stories, and shared these with classmates. Reba capitalized on the students' enthusiasm with a variety of dinosaur-related materials. Soon, posters, evolution charts, filmstrips, and scale models filled the classroom. During art class the students even constructed a monstrous brontosaurus from chicken wire and papier-mâché, standing some 4 feet high.

For her reading program, Reba redesigned a book report form into the shape of a dinosaur footprint and started a contest to see if the students could finish enough reports (footprints) to reach the library. Every time a student finished a book report, a new dinosaur step was tacked to the wall. Each book read was a step closer for the class. They completed their journey in 306 dinosaur footprints, which stretched the length of the school, from the classroom door to the library. The topic of dinosaurs was so successful that it culminated in a class anthology of stories. Here are some of the titles: "Amelia Bedelia Meets a Dinosaur," "Back in Time," "Millions and Millions of Years Ago," "Tyrannosaurus Fights Triceratops," "When Dinosaurs Ruled," "My Pet Dinosaur."

Similarly, Bill Silver and Anita Graves let the needs of their students suggest or direct appropriate ways to respond to their fourth and fifth graders. Bill acts according to what he observes; he pays attention to the writer, not just the writing, to determine whether his role is to be a prodder, reflector, or collaborator. Anita is likewise sensitive to her students' reluctance during those first sharing sessions. For instance, she fashions a safe, nonpressured beginning, allowing them to feature the cover decorations of their writing journals. Rather than rush them to read their writing, she welcomes what they have to share. It was not until the middle of December that one boy in her class felt ready to share for the first time. It is in fact a testimony to her patience and sensitivity that two days later he was sharing a further draft of his story before the group. Anita, like these other seasoned teachers, encourages reluctant students while their more eager classmates continue to be challenged. Their writing activities are designed to allow various types of students to perform competently. As teachers taking cues from students, Reba, Jack, Bill, and Anita learn by listening, observing, and following their pupils' leads.

Writing is a social act

These are classrooms with voices. The voices are those of writers rehearsing pieces, reading drafts back and forth to one another, calling out ideas, and discussing difficulties. These are social scenes. Questions like, "Can I read you my story?" "What are you writing about?" "Wanna have a conference?" "I'm stuck. What can I write?" are common. Writing times are not quiet times in these classrooms. Children frequently share their stories—even those in progress. They talk about their writing as they write. Here is a typical exchange among first graders:

Amy: I'm writing about space monsters. What are you doing?
Kara: I'm writing about Pac-Man. This is me, and here's Pac-Man eating supper with us.
David: Look at mine. I'm doing Super Pickle meets Super Orange!

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When stories are finished, students enjoy hearing them over and over again. Repeat performances are popular. Kevin C.'s "Dukes of Hazzard" piece was a favorite reread in Jack's class. Nor can writing and sharing time be neatly separated. In Anita's fourth-grade class, "sneak previews" of pieces were often "leaked to the public" before the scheduled start of sharing time. Furthermore, her students not only wrote and shared with each other; they also wrote *about* each other. Including students' names in stories became a popular trend. Classmates became characters, sometimes because it was convenient and student writers did not have to think up names, sometimes because students wanted their friends to play prominent roles in their stories. Anita observes this in her journal early in October: "The status is to have your name mentioned in a story written by a friend. During journal writing time people go around asking, 'May I put your name in my story?' "

Here is one typical request for permission that occurred during a journal writing period:

ERIC: Tom, Kevin, want to be in my story?!
KEVIN: What's it about?
ERIC: Motorcycle racing.
TOM: Yeah, but no wipeouts.
KEVIN: Who's gonna win?

The three negotiated back and forth and finally agreed on a tie.

Working on a collaborative "MASH" story, Cindy and Christine provide another example of the way students include each other in their writing. I watched them huddle together, then break to whisper to individual boys scattered about the room who were also working on their writing. The girls were excitedly requesting permission to include several not-too-enthusiastic boys in their stories. Cindy answered my inquiring glance with a gleeful, "We're getting boys to be in love with!" and raced back to her journal.

In the context of these classrooms, writing is a social phenomenon and, as we have seen, often extends beyond the act of putting thoughts on paper. Bill reminds us that "writing is not a solitary process." Participants in the process are both performers and audience, and these classrooms are places where voices of writers can be heard.

Teachers as models

Just as students in these classes learn writing in a social and collaborative context, they also learn from writers at work. These teachers model that process for and with their students. During the year they share early drafts; they conduct revision and editing sessions on their own as well as students' papers; they discuss writing processes and read finished products.

All of these teachers try to find writing time in the school day. Reba wrote, illustrated, and published her own book, *The Day that I Got Mad at My Sister*—her contribution to a growing class library, which totaled 140 books by year's end—all of which were written by members of the class. When Jack introduced journal writing to his second graders, he did so by sharing with them his journal from when he was in the Peace Corps, living on Palau. Not only did he accompany the reading of his journal with woven baskets, farm tools, and photographs of this tiny Pacific island; he also brought in his enthusiasm and pleasure as an adult keeping a journal. He linked his experiences there with his pleasure in sharing his journal writing with his students.

For her fourth graders, Anita set up a revision and editing lesson when she realized that some of their stories were drawing out narratives by using *and* and *then* too often. She overloaded her own composition with these connectives, wrote it on a huge sheet of lined paper, displayed it on an easel before the group, and announced, "You know how I feel about my stories. I think they're terrific. Here's a

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true story about my dog Barney, who's a little bit of a coward." She read:

> **Barney's Walk on the Beach**
>
> One day I took my dog Barney for a walk on the beach. We went down the cliff stairs and then headed west. Then Barney saw something way up ahead and started to run toward it. Then he stopped. Then he started walking slowly and cautiously. Then he began to sniff so then I began to follow him. . . . Then I saw it too. Something was moving at the water's edge. Then Barney started barking and barking. Then I began to laugh. The moving object at the water's edge was a feather!

"Do you think that's a perfect story? . . ."

Students respond by asking about Barney and telling of their visits to the beach.

"What could I do to make it better?"

Cindy suggests, "You say *Barney* too many times. You could put in *he* or *my dog* or something like that. . . ."

"Oh, that's so. Are there any other words that are repeated a lot?"

Students count up the number of times *Barney* is used and also discover eight occurrences of *then*.

"Is that a lot?"

"Yes!" several chorus.

"What should we do about that?"

Eric says, "Change it!"

Rich adds, "Cross some out!"

Anita smiles and reaches for a black felt-tip marker. As they together start to cross out some *thens*, Kevin remarks, "You always wreck your stories."

When Bill was drafting his article on conferencing, he brought it into class to share it with his students. He showed his students early drafts, then his latest version, including a passage on Emily that was all marked up and messy. He explained his layers of revision on one page—that he began his rough draft copy in his brown felt-tip pen, then returned to it in pencil, and worked a third time on it with a blue ballpoint pen. By being working writers, conference partners, editors, and so forth, these teachers bring to life the composing process and enable their students to learn by example and by practice.

Allowing student choice and control

"What do you want me to write about?"

"I don't know what to do. Can you give me an idea?"

"What should I write next?"

"Can you tell me what I can write about?"

These questions are familiar to most teachers. We know how tempting it is to answer such questions—to supply topics, give suggestions, even anticipate them with thoughtful motivational lessons. In these classrooms, however, Reba, Jack, Anita, and Bill refuse to take ownership away from their students. As writers themselves, they know the power of authorship. As teachers of writing, they work hard to get out from under the aegis of controlling what and how their students write.

Examples abound. Reba conferences with her first graders on drafts they choose to bring to her—not drafts she selects—for revision and editing. Jack designs skills lessons for his second graders from the context of their own writing and sharing activities, not from some developmental skills workbooks. Anita steps out of the spotlight of sharing time and redirects audience feedback away from her to a focus on the writer.

These are teachers who give their students responsibility, or what Jack calls "the power of choice." Student writers are the ones to decide when and whether to revise a piece, as Emily does in Bill's article on conferencing. Writers decide which drafts to continue with and how far, what advice to take and from whom, and what degree of investment to develop in a piece and why. Writers have the power to make decisions about their writing. They are in charge of their writing and therefore authors of their own discoveries.

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For students to exercise the "power of choice," we found that teachers needed to refrain from making choices for them. Doing so sometimes was not easy. Although Anita's revising and editing lesson cited above worked well, I recall one occasion when she began a journal writing session right after the Christmas holidays with a topic of hers. Mutiny was swift and sure, and the subsequent discussion during sharing time reminded her that they had their own topics already in mind for journal writing time. Bill wrestled with this issue of finding the proper balance between leading and allowing in his journal: "Can I convey the overwhelming difficulty of giving up control, of having patience, of 'knowing in my heart of hearts' that probably the less I do the more and better kids will write? Getting out of the way is a hard thing for an activist teacher. Can I convey the feeling of not being needed or wanted, the unwillingness to share or discuss, the pain of setting up a circumstance that makes me superfluous in so many ways? And paradoxically, being desperately needed for advice, help, companionship, protection, support, confidence?"

When students exercise their powers of choice, they take control over the decisions regarding their writing. They begin to develop what Bill calls "an emerging sense of ownership." We now see another phenomenon related to this development: these are classrooms alive with the voices of students *enjoying* their writing. These are classrooms of laughter, of writers caught up in their "enormous enthusiasm for writing," as Anita notes. These are classrooms of pleasure, of play, of experiment, of invention.

Conclusion

Although our research is far from finished, we are nevertheless beginning to see the impact writing has had on students in this district. What we see now when we go into these classes runs counter to the premise with which many students and teachers have traditionally entered their classrooms—that writing is a chore to be addressed dutifully. When we go into these classrooms now, students do not groan when teachers say, "It's time to write." In fact, we hear them frequently asking, "Can we write today?"

Note

1. During my first month in these classrooms, I was a most diligent observer, recording everything I could about what was happening in conjunction with writing. As the weeks progressed, I felt more able to participate in the classes by conducting conferences with students concerning their drafts, interviewing students on their composing processes, and otherwise serving as a writing partner, audience, and encourager. I also joined class discussions on writing and for a while in May read literature to one class.

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An Ethnography in the Classroom: When Students, Teachers, and Researchers Study the Writing Process

Paper Presented at the National Council
of Teachers of English
Washington, D.C.
November 20, 1982

Sondra Perl

It's fashionable today to talk about the writing process and those of us who have studied the writing process are very excited by what we've done and what we've learned.

But if composing is to be more than a new term or a catchy phrase, we need to understand what happens when teachers take the writing process seriously. Our presentation is designed to begin to suggest to you what happens when "good ideas" about the writing process become a reality.

Jerome Harste recently wrote that teaching is best viewed as supporting the learning that is already taking place. We've all heard from Donald Graves and Lucy Calkins that once writing becomes the focus of classroom, enormous amounts of energy are released. These two notions underlie the work we have been doing in the Shoreham district in our study of the teaching and learning of writing. Learning goes on all the time -- being human, we can't not learn. When we teach, we need to find ways to support what's already going on naturally -- sometimes that means getting out of the way, letting students' voices grow. In our project, we've seen that teachers and students work hard, but it's not the kind of hardness that exhausts or diminishes -- it's actually the kind of hard work that replenishes because it's satisfying. When we do this, classrooms become exciting places. A first grade teacher in our project who teaches writing first thing in the morning recently wrote, "My students think school begins when writing time ends." There are some interesting ideas here about school -- there are even more interesting ones about writing.

What you'll be seeing and hearing all morning is what happens when a team of students, teachers and researchers collaborate to study the writing process. First, I'd like to say a little bit about how we got together. This project really began in 1979 when Richard Sterling and I were invited to conduct a Summer Institute on the teaching of writing in Shoreham-Wading River. I wondered, why should we go there?

It's so far away. Yet it was an opportunity to work with a group of teachers in one district and bring to them the National Writing Project model in which we wrote, read our drafts aloud in writing groups, and studied writing and the writing process. Our work was so well received that we were invited back to conduct a second Summer Institute in 1980 and a third in 1981. We also returned during the school year to visit the teachers in their classrooms to discover how they were using their summer training.

After these follow-up visits when I returned to New York, I could not stop talking about what I saw happening all around me in classrooms. I decided that I wanted to tell the story of what happens when teachers take writing seriously and how they translate research and theory on composing into classroom practice.

What we've done is to have three researchers collaborate with ten teachers, our purpose: to take a careful look at what happens in classrooms when teachers take writing seriously. As a result, we are documenting how teachers who write and study their own writing processes in summer institutes turn their knowledge into effective classroom practice.

We are coming up with detailed pictures or case studies of writing teachers at work in grades 1-12. We are using an ethnographic approach and immersing ourselves in these classrooms for one year. We are taking the role of participant observers -- taking fieldnotes, writing, looking for patterns. Now I can tell you about the number of hours in school -- number of hours spent on writing, writing groups -- number of publications, drafts, revisions -- the quality of writing from September to June. But I prefer to share with you what I consider to be the more important findings, however tentative, about what happens when writing is the focus of a classroom.

Findings

Writing in the context of the classroom is a highly social act.

Traditionally, we've thought of writing as a solitary endeavor -- it's lonely -- we have the image of the writer alone at his table, agonizing over words. While this still holds true for some writers in some situations, we've come to see over and over again in classrooms, the importance of writing groups, sharing of writing, and feedback for developing writing, developing writers and paradoxically for developing independence and freedom of thought. Teachers aware of this consciously build on the social fabric of the classroom.

We're documenting how powerful the connection is among reading, writing and literature.

Most of us were taught that students couldn't write until they had learned how to read. Our data on the elementary level show that students can write before they read and, in fact, that writing is a powerful way into reading, particularly for poor readers. In upper grades, we have a lot of data to support the work of Louise Rosenblatt and Anthony Petrosky, who say that a transaction occurs between readers and texts and we have data which shows how students come to understand literature better by first responding to it in writing.

Particularly for teachers in our study, we've seen the importance of slowing down, of examining what they are doing. We are discovering how renewing it is for teachers to have time for reflection as an ongoing part of school life. Teachers need time to pause, to look at what they are doing, to write about it and replenish themselves.

From the Teaching Journal of Audre Allison:

> The project has already changed me. I'm listening harder, hearing more and therefore finding delight more often and sometimes in the smallest comment which at another time might have gone unnoticed.

Teaching writing raises some very serious questions for teachers -- questions of values.

The teachers we're studying ask themselves -- What do I believe in? What do I expect from kids? How much of teaching them to write is teaching honest expression? How much of authoring is based on developing an authentic voice?

We find that if teachers believe in the power of writing for learning, for communicating, for discovering one's voice, for saying something worth saying, then they have to address certain issues head-on. These issues are the same ones that often surface in a Summer Institute. All of us wonder, "Will I be able to share this piece of writing with my writing group?" Thus, one of the most powerful issues to appear is trust. This is talked about and written about. Here are some statements written by students in an eighth grade classroom:

> "I need respect for my piece. I want people who will listen and not laugh."
>
> "I would feel good if someone respected me and trusted me enough to share their writing . . . I would not laugh unless I'm supposed to laugh . . ."
>
> "Don't we all want the same trust? Then let's do it!"

After discussing these notions in class, a student wrote:

> "I was so involved in listening to people in class, I forgot I was there. Everyone seemed so serious and mature. I changed my opinions of some classmates for the better."

In writing classrooms, teachers move between engagement and independence.

To create an environment where students risk writing something real, we find that teachers have to bring themselves into the classroom. We're studying teachers who read and who write -- who laugh with their students and who get angry. These are writing classrooms where people are engaged.

We also find that teachers in these classrooms are constantly wrestling with the issue of power. We all know how easily students assume a subservient role when they ask "What do you want me to write?" We also know how easy it is for us to fall into the trap of telling them precisely how and what to write. We're documenting how and when teachers choose to use their authority. We find them struggling with the desire to be needed and the need to get out of the way.

From the Teaching Journal of Bill Silver:

> Can I convey the overwhelming difficulty of giving up control, of having patience, of "knowing" that probably the less I do the more and better kids will write? Getting out of the way is a hard thing for an activist teacher. It's the pain of setting up a circumstance that makes me superfluous in so many ways and paradoxically, desperately needed for advice, help, companionship, protection, support and confidence.

The teaching of writing is a creative act.

Our teachers have lessons and goals, but we find that what guides their teaching as much as any plan is what the students bring with them into the classroom. In fact, we find that teaching, like writing, is recursive -- teachers go back to a new idea or an emerging problem from yesterday in order to create a new step today. In this sense, classrooms are like drafts of writing in progress, in flux, open, exciting, in constant revision.

I think we're also documenting a new view of literacy -- or at least making the case for a broader definition of literacy. This definition includes the ability to produce a text or decode a message -- but it doesn't end there -- it also includes the ability to say something honest, real, something authentic.

Students, like the rest of us, know immediately when someone has written something alive, worth listening to. That's what makes these and I imagine many writing process classrooms special. What we're seeing is the development of voice and ownership -- where students take a great deal of responsibility for their own writing and their own learning.

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One final point: ethnographers don't collect a lot of pre and post tests because we don't believe the answers we are after can be found in test scores or numerical counts. In fact, the main instrument in an ethnographic study is the ethnographer. The research stance is one that says the only instrument equipped to comprehend something as messy and complex as teaching and learning is a human being. So, if I can end on my own experience, as fallible as that may be, I want to talk about the privilege it is to be allowed inside classrooms and to watch teachers at work. There's nothing like going in every day, early in the morning, watching the kids enter, noticing the seasons changing and the braces going on the teeth, the drafts piling up and the publications being shared, best friends having fights, couples breaking up. Many of these things would happen (do happen) whether or not teachers were exceptional or writing was a focus.

What I want to convey is that in these classrooms something else has happened, too. From this little idea -- that writing matters -- that you can begin where students are -- that you can build on strength -- that you learn to write better by writing and by sharing with peers -- a huge movement has grown.

From what we're seeing, it's beginning to challenge many of our cherished notions about teaching and learning and it's far from over.

Ethnographic Research in Progress

Paper Presented at the Lehman College Conference on the
Applications of Research to the Teaching of Writing
Bronx, NY
May 26, 1983

Sondra Perl

About 5 years ago, I became interested in ethnographic research. As a result, I began to read the few texts on ethnography that were available. Frequently I came upon a well-known anecdote: a graduate student after completing her first year of anthropology courses is given some funds from her department and told to go study an Indian group during the summer. No one has told her how to do this or even where the Indian community is located. One day, she approaches the door of Kroeber, one of the founding fathers of anthropology, to ask his advice. He, of course, is typing. When he finally looks up, she explains her dilemma. "Well," he says, returning to his typing, "I suggest you buy a notebook and a pencil."

Kroeber's statement epitomizes the mystique that surrounds fieldwork. When I began the research project I will be talking about today, I was well aware of this mystique. I knew that there were certain things I would need to do, like buying notebooks and taking fieldnotes, and I knew that certain questions would guide my inquiries, but I also knew I was embarking on a journey that at times might prove difficult and confusing and where there might be very little guidance.

For unlike traditional scientific research, ethnography does not have clear-cut boundaries. If I say I'm studying the teaching of writing, where do I begin? On the first day of school? What about the knowledge students bring with them into the classroom? How do I account for their prior knowledge and interest and the influence of their parents? If I'm interested in studying teachers of writing, how many are an adequate number? What can we learn from studying 1 teacher? Or 5? Or 10? And should I compare what teachers do? If teachers teach similarly, need I judge who's the more skilled? And what if they teach similar lessons differently? Should we assume that teachers can be compared as easily as the varieties of geraniums?

These are the kinds of messy questions that occur when we begin to bring research into the classroom. Because by bringing research into the classroom I don't mean taking the findings of carefully controlled studies and applying them to our day-to-day endeavors to see what they yield, but rather making what happens within classrooms, the problems and questions and jokes and relationships that develop, as we teach day-to-day, the subject of our inquiry. For if ethnography does anything, it recognizes that human behavior only makes sense within the contexts in which it occurs; rather than 'strip the context away' in order to control variables as most experimental research does, ethnography presumes that researchers will immerse themselves in the context to discover precisely what the hidden dynamics are. Once we see what makes this culture operate the way it does, we can then look at other contexts to see how our discoveries shed light on them.

Thus while it's the kind of research that's tricky and messy, I find myself drawn to ethnography -- mainly because in its attempt to understand human development, it is not reductive and it recognizes that the only instrument sensitive enough to understand the complexities and varieties of human experience is a human being.

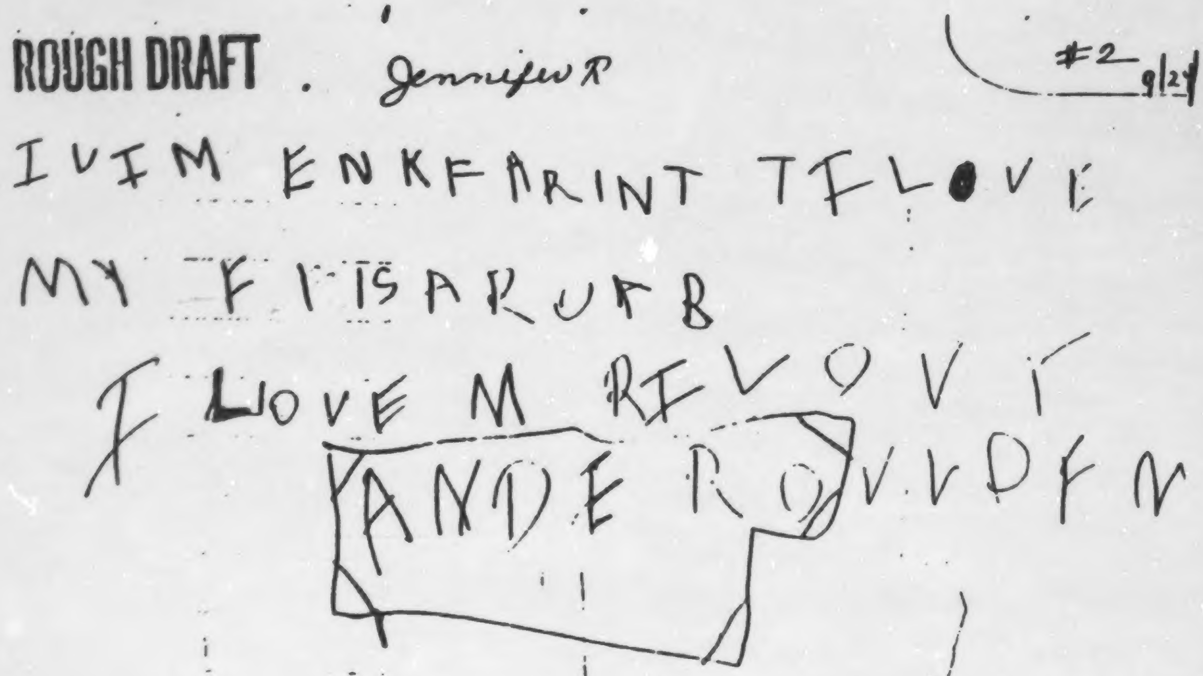
What ethnographers do then is to immerse themselves in the culture they are studying. They mix in. They become "participant-observers", they take notes, interview people, observe, reflect, question, analyze and attempt to come to an understanding of how the culture they are studying operates. In my project, we've brought this research stance into the classroom. With funds from N.I.E., 2 other researchers, 10 teachers and I are documenting how the teaching of writing unfolds in grades 1-12 in a school district on Long Island. Last year the research team lived in the district and attended classes all year, of course taking fieldnotes in our notebooks. Naturally, we had planned to type our fieldnotes all night, every night. After one evening, though, of the three of us sitting separately at our individual typewriters, we began to laugh. We realized that we were not alone in a tent on a faraway island; we had each other. We realized that our time would be far more productive if we used it to read to one another and to develop themes collaboratively. So rather than have our study conform to some preconceived notion of ethnographic method, we readily adjusted the method to fit our needs.

This year, we analyze data, look for patterns and return every other week to check our perceptions of emerging patterns both in classrooms and with the teachers. Our goal is to come up with an ethnography of writing teachers. Who are they? What do they believe? And how do their beliefs and knowledge influence what they do in the classroom?

Today, however, I'd like us to look at some student writing and I'd like you to tell me what you see in it and what you imagine the contexts are for the students who produced it.

First we will examine some writing from first grade, partly because it's so easy to assume that first graders can't really write and also because their teacher so clearly respected what they had to say and how they said it.

I have four rough drafts here by one first grader all written in 1981-1982. We begin in September 24 with a story by Jennifer.



ROUGH DRAFT . Jennifer R #2 9/24

IVFM ENKFARINT TFLOVE

MY FIISARUFB

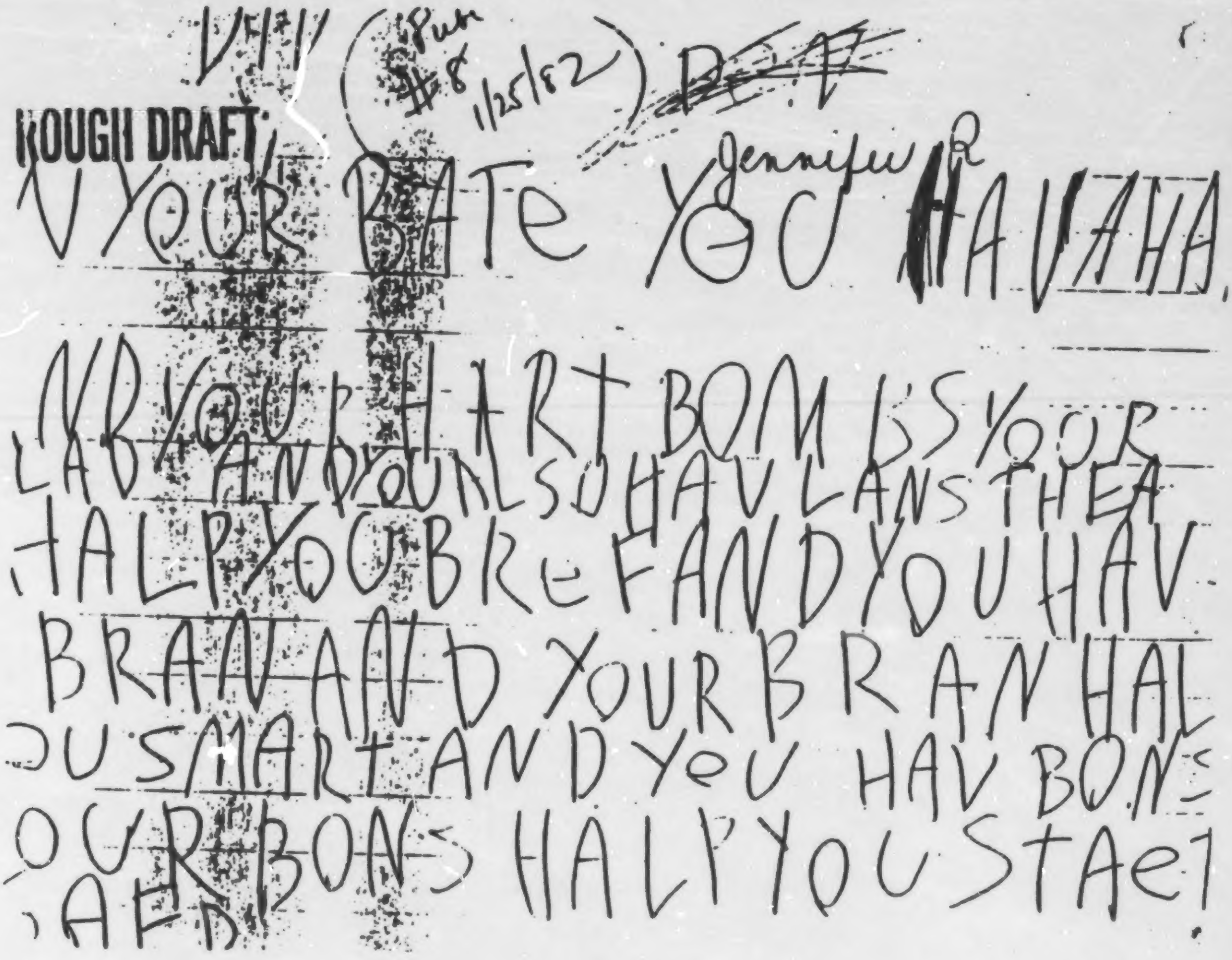
I LOVE M RFLOVI

ANDE ROVVDFN

As adult readers, can anyone here make any sense out of it? Is there anyone who notices something about this piece that you'd like to mention?

People familiar with Sylvia Ashton-Warner's work will remember that one of the things she noticed when children were able to choose the words they wanted to write was that evocative, emotional words were often learned first. It's not surprising that the one recognizable word on the page is "love" and it's written 3 different times.

Now, I'd like to skip to January 15. Jennifer is writing a draft which becomes her 8th published book.



VIII (8 pub #8 1/25/82) ~~D~~

ROUGH DRAFT

Jennifer R

V YOUR BATe YOU HAVAHA.
ND YOUR HART BOM IS YOUR
LAV AND YOU ALSO HAV LANS THEA
HALP YOU BReF AND YOU HAV
BRAN AND YOUR BRAN HAL
ƆU SMART AND YeU HAV BONS
OUR BONS HALP YOU STAE
AFD!

Next is a draft Jennifer wrote on May 3, based on a story she had heard.

#12
5/3/82 ✓

The balen and the Tige

I'm vere Tierd sed The 'oicn. i am To! sed The tiger So Thea went To slep.

Wen Thea wop up. Thea wer kcat In a net. and a bon cane a naltre. The laien sed Ta The man help me. The macus chud a The rap he brack It. The laien and The tiger gat aut and Then wer frese.

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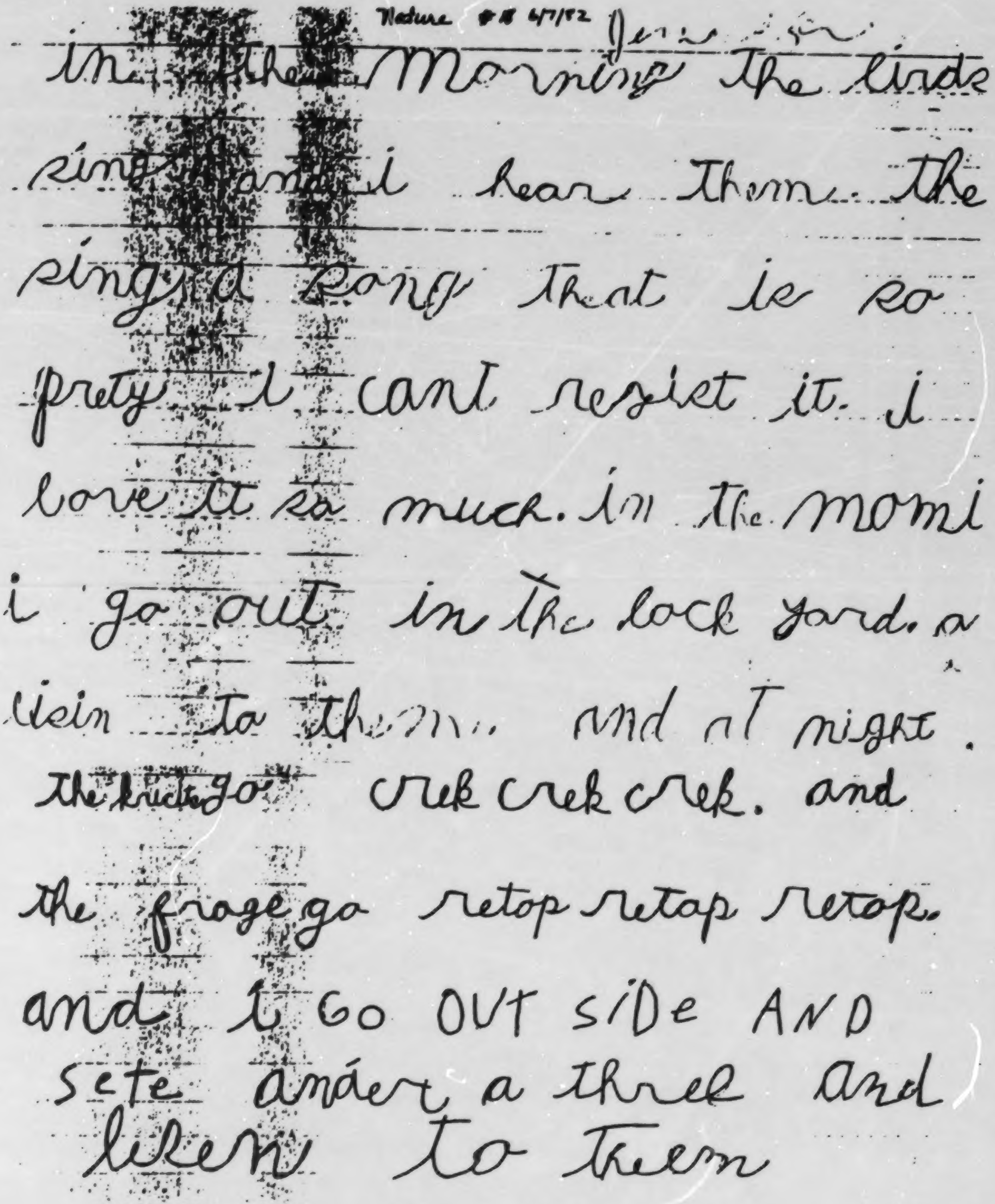
Finally we have a draft dated June 7th.



Nature #8 6/7/82 [illegible]

in the Morning the birds
sing and i hear them. the
sing a song that is so
prety i cant resist it. i
love it so much. in the morni
i go out in the back yard. a
lisin to them. and at night.
the krickets go crek crek crek. and
the froge go retop retop retop.
and i GO OUT SiDe AND
sete under a three and
lisen to them

Briefly, there are a few points worth mentioning. Jennifer is not unusual. She's an able student, but by June, all of the first graders in this district are producing texts and using writing in many ways for a variety of purposes. They write true stories, recreations of stories they have heard or read, observations, memories, fiction and fantasies, notes, lists, letters and even reports. Sometimes they have writer's block and they don't write anything. At other times, they explode. As you can see from Jennifer, as the year goes on, they include punctuation, they insert dialogue and they are capable of moving from print to script.

How does this happen? First and foremost, their teacher recognizes that they have something to say. She respects their intentions in writing. She expects them to choose, to discover, their own topics. Since she accepts everything they give her, she works from strength - from what they can do and therefore, they take risks and do not limit themselves to writing only those words they can spell. While it may be easy for us to see how this works in 1st grade, I think those of us who teach older students need to ask how how willing we are to create such contexts in our own classrooms.

I'd like us to look now at the writing of three 8th graders. What you have here are excerpts from three students' process journals, records kept by students concerning observations they make about their own composing processes. The first one is by a student who is a diligent observer of her own writing process.

From The Process Journal Of Chrissy T.

March 22, 1092

I want to try writing a poem now. I have come up with an idea which has been in the back of my head for a week. I haven't written about it yet because I was already working on two pieces. Today I feel as if I should write about this idea because it has been lingering in my mind too long.

I want to write about my eyes. I have come up with a sentence that I want to base this poem on, "My eyes are my windows to the world," but my problem is that I don't know what else I could write from this sentence. Maybe I can write about what they help me to see - both bad and good things. I don't know what I want. Try writing, this is what I'll do. Then I can sort out my problems later.

What is another word for ugliness? I've written a little bit of my poem and need a word for ugliness. Look in the dictionary. Disgusting - nah. Unsightly - no. Repulsive - I like this word. I will use it in this draft. If I revise this poem I might try a new word.

> I have completed my first draft of this poem. Does it have any potential? I don't know. I want to take this to writing group. I want to see if I should do something with this poem. Should I go on or is this piece hopeless? I like the idea the poem is based on but the poem sounds a little blah. I want to figure out how I can spice it up a little. Do you understand what I mean? I want people to think about it after they read it.
>
> April 3, 1983
>
> I have been sitting here watching T.V. knowing I really should write something, right now I am just wasting my time. I was staring at a painting today, wondering where the painter ever got the idea to do it from. How did he know which colors to put where? I am always amazed at how people think of things that seem so complicated to me, things I would never dream of.
>
> I am wondering if I could write about artists and how they create. What would follow it through? How would it end? I don't know what may grow from the bottom of this idea. I have been giving it a lot of thought. I do have some sentences in my mind that may fit into a piece about artists. I want to mainly focus on painters.
>
> His paintbox holds his innermost thoughts and emotions.
>
> April 12, 1982
>
> I thought about the ending to this piece a lot before I ever wrote it down. Now after reading it, it sounds like it was one of those brush-off endings. The kind you write if you just want to end a piece. The kind that sounds like you have not put any thought into at all. But I like the idea of the ending. I don't know if I should try to "drag" it out so it sounds like I thought about it. This might sound boring though. I have tried dragging out endings before and all I do is repeat myself. I really need to see what other people think.

What does this excerpt from Chrissy tell us? I see a lot of consciousness about composing here. Chrissy is aware of carrying ideas with her for a long time, she's aware of the generative process of writing. Finally after two weeks she

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feels an urge, an intention to make sense of a notions that's been "lingering in her mind for too long". She knows she can begin writing without knowing where she'll end up - that writing itself will help her discover what she thinks.

She states, "if I revise this poem..." She knows that revision is a choice, depending upon her commitment to the piece.

Finally, she has an intention in addition to the internal one of wanting to discover meaning in those thoughts about her eyes. She wants people to think about her writing after they read it. She knows writing can have impact.

From the Process Journal of Matt D.

April 22, 1982

I have to step up the pace. But with all the work I have been doing I've forgot about my process journal. I know I should be using it to revise but I don't have time. I get back from baseball at 10 to 5:00. Then I eat. Then do all homework and write. For christ sake I don't even watch T.V. like every normal kid in america. Too much pressure, deadlines.

I have completed my revision for editing. I did what I thought for myself to be a writing group on my own. I worked out whether to put him/her girl boy etc. Or that person, I just went back to girl. I'm sure a girl can relate to it. I'm worried about the deadline. No way I'm gonna make it.

May 3, 1982

Last week I got my first piece finalized. I also got another piece in for writing group. I did it again, I didn't make the deadlines. I won't make any deadlines because I'm about two writing group behind everybody. Now there's another piece due Friday. By Friday I'll have my second piece finalized when everybody will have three, I'll be a week behind, (two writing groups). I spend more time on my pieces. I just don't crank out pieces like most people, when you crank out pieces they don't have that much feeling.

Here we have a very different kind of excerpt, a very different voice. What do we learn about Matt from this kind of writing? That he thinks of himself as a normal kid who plays baseball and watches T.V., that he's concerned about deadlines - but - underneath the demands of schedules,

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there's a writer, a boy who wonders of a girl can understand what he's written, a boy who wants his piece to have "feeling."

From the Process Journal of Margaret C.

April 12, 1982

While I was reading this I noticed 2 things - one, is that I wrote this piece soooo long ago the 1st draft that is, even the draft I'm working from now I wrote that on the 5th? I can't believe that. When did I do that revising? In Ms. B's room? Was it that long ago? UGGG

And another thing is that I don't even like this piece that much. There's something about it that irks me. What is it? I don't know.

What kept me from writing? A combination of composing aloud and not liking the piece that much?

What is my problem - I'm mad at myself. How long was it going to take before I realized I didn't really like this piece.

Is it just because I'm frustrated now, that I'm saying that? I don't think so.

Maybe I want to get a piece about my mom - maybe I want to write "light" things. Maybe I'm just tired. Maybe I need to find out where and when I write best. Certainly it's not at 10:00 pm.

There are certain phrases and sentences in the piece I don't like. I like the beginning - but the whole thing seems like a boring story. There's no plot.

What is the point of this story?

I think it's to write something to tell my Grandpa how much I respect and think of him. Maybe this isn't the mode to use. To me a story should have a beginning to build things up, a middle where it happens and an ending that ties it up. Maybe that's why the little continuation I wrote on Tues. 4th period was sort of exiting - Giving it a twist. Making more of a plot. Do I want it to go that way? I can't get a sincere reaction down without sounding corny. Why do I seem to be resisting so much? Que pasa? Why am I writing so big?

> I'm really unsettled these days. Maybe its got to do with Spring Festival. And not enough sleep. Anxiety attacks, friends etc. I'm such a baby. Everything's got to be perfect or else I can't write. I don't really mean that, but it's been that way lately. I should stick to writing light stuff. Maybe if I could get the mag done with "light" stuff it would be easier. I don't want junky stuff that I don't care about but I just can't seem to get into something big lately like a story. To me poems are easier and monologues seem easier. Stories are always heavy for me.

With Margie we have another example of a student who is conscious of the process of composing and how it works. She talks comfortably about free writing, writing groups, distractions, and frustrations and joys. Through writing and through beginning to examine her own writing process, she's also beginning to know how she thinks. Through writing she is coming to know herself.

...

If we think of classrooms as contexts, what had to be operating here for these students to write in this way? What governing principles can you deduce?

1. Students can work on more than 1 piece at a time.
2. Revision is a choice.
3. Writing has impact.
4. It is important to work with peers and solicit their response.
5. It is O.K. to complain.
6. There are deadlines that need to be met.
7. Writing should have voice.

In her book Writing and Learning Across the Curriculum, Nancy Martin speaks of children's intentions and she calls them "robust." However, as students become older, she says, they often seem to lose touch with their intentions as if they've gone underground. From Jennifer's writing and from our own experience with young writers, we probably have little difficulty in believing that children are curious about the world and that they want to explore it, through talking, drawing, dancing, sculpting and even writing. Nor do we have much difficulty imagining the 8th graders we just looked at as being committed to and curious about writing. Yet many of us wonder what's happened to older students -- basic writers. Judging from the products these students produce, we assume that they don't want to write, that they don't have anything to say or at least that their intentions have been thwarted.

It's when we begin to talk about thwarted intentions and about what goes wrong in many writing classrooms that I think we have something to learn from another area of research -- research on composing. In my early studies, I took students out of the classroom to study how they wrote. I now realize _they_ know far more about how they write than we do. If we are to help our older students become better writers I think we need to inquire with them into the nature of their composing processes.

In conclusion, I'd like to quote from Bruno Bettelheim's recent book on reading. Bettelheim defines true literacy as "the enjoyment of reading and the meaning one gains from it that enriches one's life." He despairs that as children become adults they "may read for information, but not for enjoyment or to enrich (their) lives," and he questions whether as educators, we have ever fully embraced the notion of true literacy or equipped our students to become literate adults in more than a perfunctory way.

Much of what Bettelheim says about reading can easily apply to writing. I want to enlarge his definition of true literacy to include the enjoyment of both reading and writing and the meaning one gains from them. And similarly, we know that today many adults keep lists or write informative letters, but we must ask how many members of our literate society write for enjoyment, for enrichment, for making and conveying understanding meaning?

Bettelheim tells us that if we are to educate students for true literacy, we must make reading (and I add writing) "a significant personal experience so that students can recognize that through reading (and writing) they can gain a better understanding of themselves." For, he says, "we are all much more, and much more deeply, committed to what we actively shape or reshape than we are to what we must accept exactly as offered; thus, whether a child will develop a deep and lasting commitment to reading (and I add writing) will be strongly influenced by whether he views reading (and writing) as something imposed on him from the outside, or as something in the creation of which he actually participates."

As teachers and researchers, I believe we must continually inquire into the nature of literacy - of writing and reading and learning. I believe we must consider how we can create contexts which enable students to participate fully in their own learning and how we can equip them to become truly literate. I fear that if our definitions of writing and the contexts in which we teach writing are narrow, we will unwittingly restrict our students' potential as writers. I also believe once we enlarge our notions of learning and literacy we often fashion for ourselves different roles as teachers and create possibilities for students which enable them to grow as writers and thinkers.

For in the end, the work I've done in ethnography leads not only to answers but to further questions. Perhaps the most important application of this research to teaching is that it challenges us to inquire into the ways we teach, into the kinds of contexts we both inherit and create, and to ask

3-75

ourselves what would have to change in our settings and in ourselves for students to become truly literate.

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Contexts for Teaching Writing: View of an Eighth Grade Classroom

Paper presented at the Language and Reading
Conference
New York University
October 1984

Sondra Perl

This is what Brian wrote to his teacher on his first day in 8th grade:

> The subject of writing is really known as mud to me.

Margie commented:

> What I didn't like about last year's program was the writing groups. I liked the idea of a writing group, but the kids in my group were deadheads. I couldn't get them to ask decent questions or give detailed answers.

Jeff wrote:

> I don't like to say this but there weren't too many positive things about last year's writing program.

Mike said:

> Sometimes I have trouble putting what I feel on paper because I'm afraid somebody might get their hands on it.

Leslie commented:

> Last year wrighting was hard for me because I had trouble wrighting a "proper" story. I wouldn't dare hand in one of my short love story's because of the fear of being laughed at. I'm allways worrying what people think.

Chrissy wrote:

> The only thing I did not like about last year's program was doing process in a process journal. I wrote it every time I wrote a story, but it did not help me at all with my writing. Also, to me it was bore and just a bother.

Here's what the same kids and some of their classmates wrote in June at the end of their 8th grade year:

Dina wrote:

> I can't believe how my thoughts have changed about writing. In one word I want to say "I love it" (well maybe more than one word.)

Jimmy reported:

> I feel that this year was the best year of my life as far as school goes. I think the writing program here is the best anywhere. I think every kid in the world should try writing groups.

Chrissy said:

> Process journal. Once I learned to use it as something to help me, I really enjoyed writing in it. My process journal was a place for me to turn to when I had problems with writing.

Leslie wrote:

> Last year's program didn't help me for some odd reason. Last year, I didn't even know what a process journal was used for! My pieces were short and unmeaningful. None of me was in my pieces. Now, they are fairly long and I care about them, I feel the quality of my pieces has gone up a great deal! It used to be hard for me to write a piece. It was like a chore, I *had* to do. This year, I write on my free time, and I get alot more done.
>
> I guess the best part of my writing this year is I understand it and I *like* it.

And Brian:

> The improvement is much better and the hatred is less. I am totally satisfied.

I think the first question any of us asks when we hear responses like these is "How did she do it?" "What happened in that classroom to turn those kids around?" In other words, "What did that teacher do?"

I'm going to talk today about what Diane Burkhardt -- this teacher -- did and, in fact, what Diane does -- how she teaches writing -- was one of the questions I had when I took on the role of ethnographer and lived for 1 year in her classroom and her home on eastern Long Island -- but I want to caution all of us at the outset that we should not mistake what Diane does as the whole answer. In fact Diane used many of the same techniques and engaged in many of the same activities the 7th grade teacher did when he taught writing to these same kids.

Thus, I'm suggesting that the answer to the question -- "How did these 8th graders become so enthusiastic about writing?" -- does not lie in the realm of technique alone and what I'm inviting you to do today is to listen for what else you think is occurring when I describe to you how Diane teaches writing. I will conclude today by telling you what I think is going on in this classroom that creates what I will call a "powerful context for learning" but I want to stress that, as far as I'm concerned, the answers are not all in yet. I plan to spend the next year and a half analyzing what happened in this classroom and for me the inquiry is still open. Today, I'll take you inside the classroom and present several vignettes -- taken from thousands that fill my notebooks -- to show you a writing teacher at work. I will also read to you excerpts from Diane's Teaching Journal -- in which she recorded her perceptions of classroom events, kids, her reflections on teaching.

...

It's the 7th day of school. Diane is explaining the difference between a process journal -- where kids write about themselves as writers -- and an idea log -- a private journal in which kids write anything they want. Diane shows them her idea log and says, "This is mine. I'll show you the cover, but you can't read it. It's where I put things that are on my mind."

Kathy looks up, puzzled. She says, "I understand that no one reads yours. But do you read ours?"

Diane: Good question - no. If you can't read mine, I can't read yours. The same rules apply.

...

It's the 4th week of school. Diane and the class are working on how to respond to a piece of writing when the students work in writing groups. Diane, after a lot of discussion, asks the kids: "As an author, what response would you want?"

Nancy replies, "I have a picture in my mind when I write. I want to know if `they' have the same one."

Seth says, "I rather have a feeling -- you know, like how they felt."

Greg interjects, "The kind of response you want depends on if you care about the piece."

Diane responds, "I assume you will write only what you care about."

...

Diane wants her kids to observe themselves as writers and to keep track of their observations in their process journals. But, as you've heard, most kids don't want to do this. Based on their experience in the 7th grade, they think of it as "a chore", "a drag". Frequently they complain, "Why do we have to do this?" Here's what Diane writes in her teaching journal in September:

> I have a basic question as to how to spread my joy in exploring and documenting my composing process to my students. What do I need to know in order to understand how to do this? I need to know more about what they presently think it means to "write process" or as they say "to process it" as in "Shall we process this piece after we write it, Mrs. Burkhardt?" The phrase "processing it" bothers me. Is it a verb? Is it something you do or something that is...it's there all the time. We have to discover it. What good does it do to discover it?
>
> Kids, do you see yourselves as writers? Maybe that's the problem -- that they don't, I mean.

...

As kids begin to take writing more seriously, they bring drafts of pieces to their writing groups and by November they begin to publish them in a class magazine. At this point Diane wonders about her own role and the impact she has on kids. In her teaching journal she writes:

> I wonder what kids expect from me in terms of response to a piece. Can they put my comments (oral or written) in perspective? Do they think whatever I say should carry more weight? How anxious are they to please me rather than themselves?
>
> November 10-
>
> I sometimes wonder if I confuse the kids by accepting a great deal about them and their writing. Do they think I don't

3-80

> care? In other words, are my expectations clear? Do they understand that I trust them to be doing the best job they can and if they aren't, is it in some way a violation of mutual trust? I think of Tom who in my opinion has done very litte. Does Tom think he pulling the "wool over my eyes"? What message is he receiving from me when I treat his BMX poem of 15 lines with the same seriousness I treat Mike's long story which has undergone some fairly significant revisions?

...

At other times during the year, Diane writes about the kids themselves in her journal. Sometimes she writes to fill me in on something that happened, at other times just to think about student's behavior. I'm going to read several different entries from different times during the school year. Again, I want to remind you to listen not just for what Diane does but for the way she thinks -- in this case about kids.

> 10/29
>
> Chris races back at the end of 9th period to report to me once again how well her writing group went, how many ideas she got for her piece, her desire to revise some parts tonight and get feedback from them on it, their plan to meet tomorrow at lunch, etc. Her mood swings up and down based upon how she feels about her writing. She likes this piece.... It's the first thing this year she's been excited about. That's wonderful to see even though I have difficulty understanding why she feels about it as she does. I guess I should try to find out what she likes so much about this piece and try to understand it.

...

> Maria and I talked for about a half hour today and also looked through her folder. She was surprised to learn that she has missed a few "assignments" mainly because she has done them but not turned them in. She told me how she did that a lot last year -- especially with "compositions" because she didn't care for her teacher and didn't want to write for her. She doesn't want to do that this year. "I like you," she said. "If I

don't do the work you give us I can't look at you. I feel too guilty." I told her that my feelings for her as a person were not affected by whether she did her work or not, but I certainly understood what she was saying. I told her about how I felt last Tuesday (10/27) when I hadn't done a careful job "on my assignment for Sondra." "No teacher ever talked to me like you do." One of the important things to result from this talk was a clarification of procedures, expectations. But THE MOST IMPORTANT thing was the strengthening of the bond between us.

...

Tonight Karin called to ask me if it was okay if she rework her piece completely. Because I was in the middle of a serious talk with Theo I didn't find out a lot about why and what, but I was impressed with the fact that she called. Makes me feel accessible. I'd love to know what prompted her to do it, how easy/difficult it was for her.

...

11/10

Kristen is a kid I'm curious about. She has said more than once that she worries if I will think she has "done as much work as someone who has written a long piece," but insists that her poems have involved a lot of thought, that it's a real struggle for her. Sometimes I believe her, lots of times I don't, but I feel like I've always responded sympathetically, and paid particular attention to talking with her, etc. In fact, every time I talk to her individually about her writing or writing group or process journal, etc. she seems insincere, flippant, hostile, or argumentative. It would be very interesting for me to see inside her head and know what she perceives.

...

Tara's another weird kid. Back from Ireland Monday. Kids excited to hear about her trip. She has nothing to say.

Margaret especially (who visited Ireland a year ago) really "worked" to get some information from Tara. Tara just said how tired she was. What a bummer! At lunchtime I talked to Tara. She has two pieces which have never been revised. To my knowledge she has done little for weeks. I've talked with her before about both pieces. Today we talked again. I'm sure she hasn't revised because the pieces are basically dull and don't say much. She's another closed person holding a lot inside. I think she's depressed and has been for a long time. It's always hard to talk to her about real things. I always feel like I'm forcing her. I don't know what the impact of our talk today will be. I'm not optimistic. What is it that she could write? How can I get her turned on to something - anything?

...

I finally had a conference with Tom Tuesday. A big part of it was about his writing group with Matt and Mike and how they don't help him much. I got him to see that he projects to them an attitude that he will not accept their feedback anyway, so why should they be careful and detailed or ask very many specific questions? I pointed out that he's used to being very self-reliant, very much a loner, and this carries over to his writing. He thought this seemed very much on the mark. "You can make it different, Tom. You can affect how they are when discussing your piece."

Tom has discovered that he likes to write. If I think back to how negative he has been and how resistant throughout the year, I can see this as a minor miracle.

Tuesday morning I had a conference with Sam and we talked about why he lied to me before vacation about having his piece completed when in reality he had no more than part of a page and an idea about what he wanted to say. I listened to him and supported him, let him know I understood his fear of telling the truth and what my reaction might be. Once again, told him that if I don't know the truth about what is going on with him I can't assist him, can't do my job. We talked about some specific ideas he has, etc. In the fall, he was the only kid who

3-83

didn't complete a piece for the magazine. I am determined not to let that happen again.

...

Talk with Jeff at end of English B about why he hasn't done anything with any of those pieces and why the short piece he turned in yesterday doesn't relate to his theme. I tell him he's moving away from it. He says he know that and he doesn't feel good about it. I say he's got a choice to make. It doesn't help matters any that he can barely write with his broken hand.

Same talk with Leslie at lunch time. She hates what she's written lately but is afraid to write what's really on her mind. Risk -- choices! She knows that she is doing this to herself. She said it.

Friday: English was all writing groups -- both periods. I sat with Greg, Bill, Chris first just to talk with them about what they're doing -- I fought down the urge to scream at them. Merely told them that I was feeling upset and concerned that they had not handed in any final pieces, that I didn't know what they needed from me, etc. They were mostly unresponsive. Bothers me that this magazine project doesn't really work for them, wonder about the wisdom of having this as a project for every single kid. Maybe some should have the option of contributing to a group magazine. Or if it's a project for every kid individually then I need to do a better job of establishing daily contact with those who will flounder most easily.

...

In Diane's classroom, kids bring drafts of pieces they are working on to writing groups. One way Diane keeps track of what's going on is to have the kids tape record their discussions. That way she can listen in later on at home or during a free period to see how kids are responding. She doesn't listen to every tape of every group but selects those groups that she thinks need some help. For example here's what she records in March about writing group tapes:

3-84

> Today, I listened to 3 writing group tapes: those that I feared might be the worst. Much to my surprise, they weren't nearly as bad as I thought. The main problem is one of haste. Kids rushing through a piece. Kids asking "Are you done? Are you done?" rather than carefully considering a piece, finding strengths, asking questions, etc. Another problem is one of not pursuing questions or points. For example Matt asks John, "Why do the teachers become so nice all of a sudden?" "I don't know," says John. "Oh," says Matt. End of Discussion. The same thing happened in a discussion of Greg's piece wherein the main character does every conceivable drug, kills a man, and runs from the police -- all because the girl he liked would not go out with him. Christian asks him why he had the main character do all the drugs and kill a person. "I don't know," says Greg. End of Discussion. You might be wondering how I could find anything good in the midst of such as this. To me the good part is that those questions were asked in the first place.

...

While kids are writing, Diane's classroom takes on a workshop atmosphere. Kids set their own writing group time, pick up tape recorders and find quiet places in the school to read and respond to one another's writing. When they are not meeting in groups, they can be found in Diane's room, drafting or revising pieces, conferring with a peer or with Diane or me. One afternoon in May, I noticed the following. Margie was bent over her desk working on a piece. Diane got up from where she was sitting and walked over to Margie, obviously planning to ask her something. Margie held her hand up to silence Diane. When she finished the section she was working on, she put down her pen and looked up, which indicated to Diane that it was O.K. to talk.

...

All through the spring, kids are working to finish writing that will be published in individual magazines. By the end of April Diane wants the kids to begin editing their pieces so they will be ready for publication -- typing, proofreading, xeroxing. She tells them on Monday that their writing groups will become editing groups and that by Friday, one piece should be completely edited. Diane writes about what happens in her journal:

> 4/22: Today one big thing was the need to alleviate all the anxiety over the "deadline." Kids were trying to rush through the process so they would get done by Friday. For me it was a real learning experience. I saw that I should have "mapped out" the week with each kid so each could see what he/she needed to do each day in order to meet the deadline. It's funny what a different atmosphere that deadline created. Kids were into their own pieces, not so interested in other's work. Fighting over whose piece gets edited first. Not at all the way they had been during the previous weeks of writing pieces, revising, discussing, etc. How could this project be done without setting a deadline? Would it be possible to stay closely in touch with each person individually? I think that would take a few more teachers.
>
> Tomorrow morning I will type the "memo" to the kids about LIVE-LINES (not deadlines) -- targets to aim for in completing one's magazine.

And in class the next day, she says:

> I didn't mean to but I think I created the wrong atmosphere in here about the deadline. On Monday, I gave you a deadline, to have a piece finalized by Friday. One reason for that is if we never have deadlines, things can go on and on. I know we need them because it helps you see what the limits are. What I didn't think out to do was have a brief talk with each person so you would see what you have to do each day. I learned I didn't introduce the deadline well because now people are very uptight about it. In order to meet the deadline, you are rushing and skipping steps in the process. I don't want that. What I want is for you to be very satisfied when you get your magazine and read it.
>
> I forgot that you worry if things aren't in on time. What happens if you miss tomorrow's deadline? Nothing bad. If you can't turn something in tomorrow, turn it in when you can. You need to ask yourself, "What do I need -- another writing group or revision?" Well, do that and hand it in next week.

3-86

We can't skip stages just to meet a deadline. We will create a new one and aim to meet it. I've looked at the calendar. I think most people can be finished with everything by May 14th. That gives you three weeks. Now, you need to be responsible and keep checking your progress. The magazine is also a commitment to yourself. You have to ask yourself, "Am I doing every day what I have to in order to make this magazine what I want?" Sondra and I are both here to help you, but this is your job.

Does anyone have a question? Silence.

No? Was I so clear?

Chris C: Can we still get to writing groups?

Diane: Yes.

Chris: and there's no deadline tomorrow?

Diane: No. There will be a deadline for putting everything in to the typist but there won't be a deadline if it means skimping on the process.

Matt: would it be a good idea to do our planning in the process journal?

Diane: Yes. My interest here is to relax things.

On Friday, April 23, Diane provides students with a memo on the new deadlines for the magazine; only she changed the name -- now they are referred to as livelines.

...

Now I'd like to read what happened during the last official English class of the year. After we all sat down, amidst excitement at the end of school, I once again checked with the kids if I had their permission to take home their process journals and drafts of pieces for my research. They were basically agreeable and then Brian asked, "Are you really writing a book?"

Our conversation went like this:

Sondra: Yup.

Brian: On us?

Sondra: On how you learned to write this year.

Matt: Will you have a writing group?

Sondra: Yeah, I will. The first reader will be Diane but also the other teachers in our project.

Matt looks troubled: But that's bad.

Diane: Why?

Matt: Because Mrs. B you know what Sondra is writing about. You know us. You wouldn't be a good judge.

Dina jumps in: That's not right. Mrs. B is the best judge because she's the only one who knows what Sondra is trying to say.

Matt: But that's the problem.

When we ask the kids for solutions, they come up with one:

Kids: You need 2 writing groups.

Sondra: That's right. I think the first and the best audience is Diane and you because it's about you. But I'll also need others who weren't here because I want other teachers to be able to understand it.

Diane then directs us to do some free writing. "Write about whatever is on your mind, this last day of class." After ten minutes, she calls us back. "Maybe we could break now and come to a close."

As we come together, Diane begins: While writing I realized something. You know the last week of school is always hard for me. But it just dawned on me that you guys are going to have a book written about you. I don't think I need a book to capture everything, but this has been an incredible year and it's all documented. All of a sudden I'm in touch with the joy of the end of the year. We have a lot to be happy about. I want to say thank you. I may even be able to go through the rest of the week without feeling miserable.

Now, I bet Sondra could jog our memories if she read to us from the world's most complete set of notes.

Sondra: Call out a day.

The kids respond: 88, 116, 33...

I turn to Day 79 in my fieldnotes and begin reading. The class ends with me reading and the kids listening and laughing.

From Diane's Journal
Tuesday, June 22

I actually felt quite good Tuesday for our last class. I liked being with the whole group, talking about/hearing about your plans, hearing fieldnotes from day 96 or whatever it was. Great discussion about who is the best writing group for your book...Matt thinking it should be strangers, Dina thinking it should be me and others who know what really went on.

3-88

> One of the things I wrote in our few minutes of writing was the joy I felt that even on day 180 kids will write in class when given the opportunity. What's that they say about the power of writing?
>
> I also got very excited thinking about a book being written about this year (an unusual way for me to feel about that), very full of love thinking of you and what you've meant to me, to the kids, to the things we've done, very much in touch with what a wonderful year it has been and how great the kids are.
>
> Why be sad? I write.
>
> And later I made a little progress report to the kids on how I was feeling and dealing with my end of the year sadness.
>
> Do they have a sense of how special this year has been? How can they? It's the only 8th grade year they have ever had.

...

To the kids, their 8th grade year may have seemed like any other one. To us, though, it was special. It allowed us -- Diane and me and the other teachers and researchers who joined us in this study -- to look beneath the surface of teaching and to study what allows the writing process approach to unfold.

I'd like to pause now and consider what allowed writing to become as important as it did in Diane's classroom, to decipher what messages Diane gave to her students about themselves as writers, as learners. Obviously there are many of them.

Diane treats the kids with respect -- the way she would expect to be treated -- the rules are the same. If as an author she has a private journal, they do too.

She sees the kids as authors -- she calls them that and wonders when they are so negative, if that's the root of the problem -- that they don't see themselves as authors. When they do see themselves as writers, she conveys on them the rights and privileges that writers have -- the ability to control topics and time.

She lets the kids in on her assumptions. She tells them about what matters to her and what she expects.

She doesn't panic when things go wrong -- rather she turns problems into opportunities for further learning. She approaches each problem as an inquiry and brings her inquiry into the classroom. And just as she questions herself, so the kids are free to question her too. She asks, how come this happens, and what would I need to know to do X?

3-89

She accepts the kids' frame of reference. Rather than condemn or discard a piece of writing she finds trivial, she attempts to see what makes it meaningful to the students who produced it.

Finally, she lets kids know in innumerable ways that it's how they relate to her as human beings, not how they perform academically that matters the most to her.

What does all this say about the teaching of writing? I'm suggesting that when we teach, we don't just transmit expertise and information. Rather we communicate -- in all of our actions -- what we believe about our students adequacies as learners. In essence, we create not only a context for learning but a context in which relationships unfold. Thus, I suggest that what makes Diane's teaching powerful is that sha does not only do the "writing process approach" but rather she creates relationships with kids who are, in her eyes, writers. She is not waiting for them, to "turn out" one day after she's taught them -- a sort of "one day, some of you may become writers" -- but she begins as if they already are. She establishes what I want to call a relationship of competence with them -- their adequacies as writers is a given and she interacts with them from this perspective.

In conclusion, I suggest that it's the relationships Diane creates with her kids that empowers them to become writers -- and if we are interested in creating powerful contexts for writing in our classrooms, then each of us needs to begin an inquiry. I think we need to study ourselves as we teach and to examine not only what we do but what messages we give to students about themselves as writers, as readers, as learners. For, I believe, it is only when we communicate in such a say that students discover their own abilities that we create contexts that enable our students to learn.

List of Forthcoming Work

Six Teachers Teaching. Portraits and analysis of six writing teachers at work. Manuscript completion date: April 1985. Tentative publication date: November 1985. Currently under consideration by Heinemann Educational Press.

Sondra Perl & Nancy Wilson

When Writers Read: A Study of the Teaching of Literature in a Writing Process Classroom. Research project supported by the Faculty Research Award Program of the Board of Higher Education, City University of New York.

Sondra Perl & Nancy Wilson

An Ethnography of a Writing Teacher at Work. An in depth study of one writing teacher. Supported by the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation.

Sondra Perl

A Descriptive Analysis of Fourth Grade Writing. Ed.D. dissertation in progress. Teachers College, Columbia University.

James Carter

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Section 4

Dissemination

List of Conferences and Workshops with Selected Hand-Outs

1982

How Teachers Teach the Writing Process: A Collaborative Research Model. CCCC, San Francisco, CA, March 18, 1082. (Perl)

Using Ethnography to Study How Teachers Teach Writing. Forum on Ethnography in Education, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, March 1982. (Allison, Carter, Glassman & Wilson)

Using a Writing Process Approach in Grades 1, 8 & 12. Metropolitan Schools Study Council, Wave Hill, Bronx, NY, March 30, 1982. (Burkhardt, D., Pekala & Schutzman)

Creating Writing Support Groups. Women in Action Conference, State University of New York, Stony Brook, NY, October 16, 1982. (Allison & Glassman)

Reading and Writing: Research on the Process by Classroom Teachers. 19th Annual Reading Conference, Kean College of New Jersey, Union, NJ, October 23, 1982. (Pekala, Schwartz & Silver)

Ethnography and the Writing Process: Exploring the Relationship. Delaware Valley Writing Council, Philadelphia, PA, October 30, 1982. (Perl)

Writing in the Elementary School. Syosset School District Conference Day, Syosset, NY, November 2, 1982. (Pekala & Silver)

An Ethnography in the Classroom: When Students, Teachers and Researchers Study the Writing Process. NCTE, Washington, D.C., November 2, 1982. (Perl, Wilson, Allison, Burkhardt, D., Burkhardt, R., Schutzman & 12 students)

1983

Creating Contexts for Writing. Bard College Institute on Thinking and Writing, Annandale, NY, January 21, 1983. (Perl, Wilson, Allison, Burkhardt, D., Burkhardt, R. & 13 students)

Research on Writing: How to Get Started. The Maryland Writing Project Faculty Institute Retreat, Baltimore, Maryland, February 3, 1983. (Perl)

A Writing Process at Work. New York State Middle School Association, Shoreham, NY, March 12, 1983. (Burkhardt, D. & four students)

"Education 2000": How to Create a Multi-Media Show. New York State Middle School Association, Shoreham, NY, March 12, 1983. (Burkhardt, R. & 10 students)

Literacy and Evolving Technology. Invited Participant, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, March 15-17, 1983. (Perl)

What Happens When Knowledge About the Composing Process Changes Teachers' Practices? CCCC, Detroit, Michigan, March 19, 1983. (Perl, Wilson, Burkhardt, D. & Allison)

Using a Writing Process Approach in the Middle School. Workshop on Middle School Education, South Portland, ME, March 28-30, 1983. (Burkhardt, D. & Burkhardt, R., with 10 students)

Implications of Classroom-Based Research. Phi Delta Kappa Research Forum, Hofstra University, Long Island, NY, April 9, 1983. (Perl, Burkhardt, D. & Coughlin)

Literacy: Educating Informed Readers and Writers. Keynote Address, The Watkinson School, Hartford, Connecticut, April 14, 1983. (Perl)

The Composing Process: Rehearse, Draft, Revise, Edit, Publish. Nassau Reading Council, Hofstra University, Hempstead, NY, April 23, 1983. (Burkhardt, R. & six students)

All-Day Workshop on the Writing Process. Walden School, New York, NY, April 25, 1983. (Allison, Burkhardt, D., Silver & 12 students)

Teaching Writing as Process. Canadian Council of Teachers of English, Montreal, Canada, May 11, 1983. (Perl)

Process: Vision and Revision. Keynote Address, Teachers College Institute on Writing, New York, NY, May, 1983. (Perl)

Ethnographic Research in Progress. Lehman College Conference on Applications of Research to the Teaching of Writing, Bronx, NY, May 26, 1983. (Perl)

Gaining Power through Writing. Women in Action Conference, State University of New York, Stony Brook, NY, October 15, 1983. (Allison)

Under the Microscope: Collaborative Research on Teaching and Writing. NCTE, Denver, CO, November 19,1983. (Perl, Burkhardt, D. & Coughlin)

Stages in an Ethnographic Research Project. Literacy Institute at the University of Pa., Philadelphia, PA, December 6, 1983. (Perl & Wilson)

Qualitative Research: An Ethnographer's Perspective, MLA, New York, NY, December 28, 1983. (Perl)

1984

Full-Day Staff Workshop on Middle School Education. Niskayuna School District, Schenectady, NY, February 6, 1984. (Burkhardt, R. & students)

WRITE ON ! Workshop, New York State Middle School Association, Shoreham, NY, March 1984. (Burkhardt, D. & five students)

Studying the Writing Process in the Elementary School. Metropolitan Schools Study Council, New Rochelle, NY, February 9, 1984. (Graves, Schwartz & Silver)

Classroom Research on Teaching: Three Perspectives. CCCC, New York, NY, March 30, 1984. (Perl, Burkhardt, D. & Coughlin)

Three Student Writers from High School to College. CCCC, New York, NY, March 30, 1984. (Perl, Wilson, Allison, Kroeger, Scheld, Ecklund)

"America 1984": How To Do a Multi-Media Show. New York State Social Studies Conference, Ellenville, NY, April 2, 1984. (Burkhardt, R. and students)

Workshop on Writing. Metropolitan Schools Study Council, Englewood, NJ, April 13, 1984. (Burkhardt, D. & eight students)

Composition in the Classroom: The National Writing Project Process Model at Work. ASCD Conference, Kiamesha Lake, NY, May 7, 1984. (Allison, Burkhardt, R., Graves & three students)

Workshop on Curriculum Innovations. U.S. Department of Education Search for Excellence in Secondary Schools Recognition Conference, Manchester, CT, May 10, 1984. (Burkhardt, D. & six students)

Aspects of the Writing Process. Nassau Reading Council, Manhasset, NY, May 15, 1984. (Burkhardt, R. & six students)

When Readers Write: Literature Logs in the Classroom. University of New Hampshire Seminar on Reading & Writing, Durham, NH, October 13, 1984. (Wilson & Allison)

Connections Between Writing and Mathematics. Port Jefferson Public Schools, Port Jefferson, NY, October 22, 1984. (Silver)

Workshop on the Writing Process. Bard College Institute for Writing and Thinking, Simon's Rock of Bard College, Great Barrington, MA, October 26, 1984. (Burkhardt, D.)

Contexts for Teaching Writing: View of an Eighth Grade Classroom. New York University Language and Reading Conference, New York, NY, October 28, 1984. (Perl)

4-5

ETHNOGRAPHY IN THE CLASSROOM: WHEN STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND RESEARCHERS STUDY THE WRITING PROCESS.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

by Sondra Perl

GOAL:

Findings from ten years of basic research on the composing process are beginning to suggest new approaches for teaching writing. Little is known, however, of what takes place when teachers' practices are informed by this research and theory. The goal of this project is to describe the classroom events and students', parents', and administrators' perceptions of these events when teachers make a shift in their teaching from an exclusive focus on written products to include attention to the writing process. Teachers rarely make this shift without first discovering renewed appreciation for their own writing and possibilities for learning about their own composing processes. The teachers involved in this study have already accomplished this shift through participating in New York City Writing Project summer institutes on the writing process.

METHOD:

Using an ethnographic approach, we have several strands:

Researchers: Last year, as participant/observers in classrooms three to four times a week, we took fieldnotes. We also wrote "thinking aloud" memos, met with students, parents, teachers and administrators, attended school and community events, and sought to find, from our preliminary observations, recurring patterns and themes. This year, we visit classrooms every other week and spend the bulk of our time analyzing our data and writing.

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4-6

ETHNOGRAPHY IN THE CLASSROOM: WHEN STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND RESEARCHERS STUDY THE WRITING PROCESS

presented by

Dr. Sondra Perl
Audre Allison
Diane Burkhardt
Ross Burkhardt
Len Schutzman

with

Brian Bigham
Walter Caskie
Tim Christensen
Chris Cosgrove
Margaret Coughlin
David Ecklund
Theresa Hannan
Sondra Kroeger
Christine Nystedt
Lynne Russo
Sue Scheld

This presentation is a collaborative effort between students and teachers in the Shoreham-Wading River school district and researchers from Herbert H. Lehman College, C.U.N.Y. The research is supported, in part, by a grant from the National Institute of Education and is under the direction of Dr. Sondra Perl.

NCTE
November 20, 1982
Washington, D.C.

4-7

FROM THE STUDENTS: WHY I WRITE

I write for many reasons. Sometimes I am forced to fill the blank spaces of notebook paper by a teacher. At other times I write because something within me tells me that I should be preserving my thoughts. This is when I like to write the most, and inevitably when I write the best.

****

Sometimes I love to write and sometimes I hate to write. I like to write when I can write about anything I want. I don't like it when the topic is given to me.

****

For me writing is the most effective means of communication. I can be bold in what I say, but say it in the safety of my room. I can be sensitive without revealing a face flushed with embarrassment, and I can even lie without averting my eyes.

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When I write I feel that I've learned a little bit more about myself. My personality comes out on paper sometimes different than I thought it to be, other times reassuringly.

Writing is a way of making me like myself more, and making myself feel better in many ways. A way of helping me to understand and solve problems.

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Writing makes me excited. Lately I have been into writing images. Describing leaves from summer to fall was the last piece I wrote. I needed to write that piece. Outside things were going on and I wanted to be part of it. I walked, hoping to be a part, but it was not enough. I sang, but the words were not mine. When I wrote, those leaves were mine. They turned into my feelings. I became a part of fall and released my feelings for it.

****

I love to write because it gives me a chance to say what I want exactly, and I can take all the time I want and cover all the possibilities on a given topic. Best of all, I can toss it into the round file and start all over again without ever saying a word about it.

****

I write about my problems, the things which puzzle me. I write what I think about. I write freely without caring who learns about me. I write who I love, why I love, or do I really love or not? I write about everything. It makes me understand other people, human behaviors, and human nature. It helps me know myself.

****

4-8

FROM THE STUDENTS: THE PROCESS OF COMPOSING

Sometimes it takes a while for my thoughts to come, but I always find something to write because I need to write. Often I can't write fast enough to accomodate the rushing thoughts. Gradually my writing process follows a pattern: Think, write, re-read, revise, then pick up where I left off.

****

I think I know pretty much where I like to be when I write. I know I want to be alone, I don't want to have time and pressure on my mind, and I like to move around and be alone. When I sit down to write, a lot of things are on my mind, so I do some freewriting first to clean all the junk out of my mind. It helps me to settle down.

****

Whenever I don't have a writing assignment due, I usually think of ideas for stories while I am lying in bed and trying to fall asleep. I get these ideas in my head and write about them the next morning. As I am writing a piece, the words seem to always flow because my brain is thinking about ideas before I write them down.

****

I was sitting by a window in my bedroom and was watching the leaves fall from the trees. I thought about how it seems like only yesterday that I was watching the trees get their leaves. I started to think about when I was in first grade. I have no idea how I thought of this, I just did. I had a perfect picture in my head of my teacher working at the blackboard and me at my desk. I thought of writing about first grade. One thing we did every morning was copy sentences. We did this every morning. She never even let us skip a day of writing sentences. That is what I decided to write about. I had no trouble at all because I saw a picture of the scene I was writing in my head and I just wrote what I saw. I also remembered how I felt.

****

FROM THE STUDENTS: WRITING GROUPS

For me the group has become an important part of my writing process. The group offers me the chance to see how the piece comes across. Have I been successful? Have I conveyed my message? But more importantly, the group helps me to define my message. It forces me to ask myself questions and to discover things that otherwise would have passed me by.

****

Knowing that I'm going to share with my group makes me start thinking about the audience, thinking about the reader, and what I can do to capture and hold that reader. I try harder when I know I'm going to read it to my group. I want them to like it.

****

Sometimes I just want to talk about some ideas I have with my group. They help me to see how much I know about a topic by asking me qustions. They ask me why I want to write about it. Then they ask me all the questions they would like to know about it. This is how I discover whether or not I have anything of interest to say about the topic.

FROM THE STUDENTS: ON DRAFTING AND REVISING

Here's the way it used to be: hand it the first written copy, receive it back with discouraging red marks, then hide it inside my notebook. Not any more though. Now I will work on a piece of writing if it takes one hundred drafts. I've no need for those bloody red slashes.

****

I begin by passing the paper through my mind. Some words stick, others fall off, and some never make the page.

****

When I write my first draft I only try to get an idea. On my future drafts I try to perfect that idea. I like th idea of knowing that I can revise something I don't have to make it perfect the first tiem, or the second for that matter.

****

Why do I revise? Not to get good grades. I revise so I can get my meaning across, so that I may deliver my idea intact and straight forward. Revision is the main difference between writing and speaking. In writing my words can't do any harm until I let someone read them.

****

When I revise a piece and re-read it and 'hate' it, I get a defeated feeling inside. "OK, what more do you want? I've been working on you for weeks now and you're still vague and incomplete. When will I be satisfied?" Then there's another side of revision. When I finally get the word I've been searching for, when I'm satisfied that my meaning is clear, then I can go to bed feeling not frustrated, but relieved and anxious to share the piece.

FROM THE STUDENTS: ON OWNERSHIP

I write for me. I'm the only one who know everything about me. No one else knows. I won't write for you.

****

Writing is something of mine, something which I can create and hold, perhaps change beyond recognition. In writing, I have the chance to mold and manipulate my words. Writing gives me the chanec to really think. Sometimes it flows and other times it does not. I always think about what I am writing. I begin to understand more what it is that I am trying to convey. I begin to know myself and my world a little better. To deny any student, teacher, or anyone else the chance to discover these things is a crime.

****

I get many joys out of writing -- joy and satisfaction. The satisfaction of knowing I worked hard. I'm proud of it and other people like it too. There are certain points where I'm stuck and then I get an idea and the feeling I get is such relief, it is in a way joy. The way ideas just come to me sometimes gives me joy. Let me put is this way. When the knot in my stomach unties, it's joy.

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DOCUMENTING THE COMPOSING PROCESS

by Diane Burkhardt
Shoreham-Wading River Middle School

My eighth grade students keep a journal in which they write about how they write. We call it the "How I Write Book", or "Journal About Writing", or "Process Journal". We do this because:

1. Every writer has a composing process.
2. The writer is the best source of information about how he/she composes.
3. There is value to the individual writer in becoming aware of all aspects of his/her composing process.
4. There is value to the classroom community of writers in sharing individual composing processes.

I think the best way for me to amplify these four points is to share an excerpt from a recent 'memo' that I wrote to my students called "The Value of Documenting Your Composing Process".

"You are the only one who knows what goes on within you and without you as you write. No one else can know as well as you can, and even though we all may share certain common features, I definitely believe that each of us composes in a way that is unique to us.

Your composing process includes so many things:
--where you like to be when writing
-- when you write
--the type of pen or pencil and paper that you like to have
--whether you have the radio, TV, or stereo playing
--whether you need to be alone or not
--possible worries about spelling
--continuous self-evaluation of the piece you're writing
--being picky about words
--lots of re-reading
--lots of false starts/ cross outs/ messiness
--etc. I could go on and on

When you hand in a piece of writing I have no way of knowing just what you may have gone through in order to complete it. Maybe it looks short on the page, but for all I know you went through a real struggle to get it there.

The more you become aware of about all that goes on within you and without you as you write, before you write, etc. the more knowledge you will have about yourself as a writer. This is knowledge you can use for the rest of your life. How can you know all that you know about yourself as a writer? How can you become more aware of all that there is to pay attention to? Sometimes I think that we only know what we know when we share it with others. Writing about your composing process is a way of sharing it.

Why write it in a journal and share it with me? The only way I can effectively work with you to improve your writing is if I know a lot about you and how you write-- all that which is a part of your process. You can count on me to support your growth in writing this year, but first of all I have to know a lot about it. I have to know more than just the words on the paper when you hand in a piece. We'll start a dialogue together about your composing process. I've had the experience many times of being able to remind students of things about how they compose-- things that they had forgotten or didn't realize or were temporarily unaware of.

4-12

I think it's also important for you to share with each other what you know about how you compose. The more you share, the more you will become aware. We can also learn things from each other that are helpful.

There seem to be two essentials. One is that you probably have to also be willing to improve your writing. And honesty is crucial. I keep saying that there is no one set way to write about your composing process. But there is! The way to write it is honestly. What good would it do either one of us if your wrote details about your composing process that weren't true?

It's hard to be aware of everything that's part of your composing. All I ask is that you give it your best shot. The more I know about how you write, the better I can do my job of assisting you!"

4-13

SUGGESTIONS FOR A WRITING GROUP SESSION

by Audre Allison
Shoreham-Wading River HighSchool

1. Listen attentively as the piece is read. Show the writer you are interested.

2. If you do not have a copy of the piece that is being read, it is a good idea t have a pencil and paper ready to jot down words or phrases that catch your attention. This will help you to respond specifically and intelligently.

3. After a writer reads to the group, allow a few seconds of silence so that you may collect your thoughts. You may want to ask the writer to read the piece a second time, especially if you do not have a copy of the writing.

4. It is important that everyone respond. Agree that everyone will respond at least once to the entire piece and to the experience of having read or heard i

5. Begin by mkaing sure you understand what the writer intended to communicate. "Say Back" -- restate what you have heard or read by summarizing the gist of what has been read, or by using some of the writers own words. This is very important. Writers need to know what has been communicated before they can benefit from further response or questions. Sometimes writers may not be sure what they want to communicate, until you "say back" what you heard. Or, at this point they often can get strong ideas as to how to revise or proceed because they know what they are aiming for and your "say back" helps them to see what else needs to be done.

6. Describe what the piece seems like so far and the impressions you had at variou points as you read or heard it. Reflect directly the mood, idea, or effect conveyed to you. Be specific. Look at your notations. Think before you respond. What about those words makes them stand out? Why those specific words? What parts do you like best? What do those parts do to you? Letting writers know what is effective about their writing is as important, if not more important, than telling them what doesn't work. Be sure to respond to specific sections of the writing. A general response like "I like it", or "What was goo or "It is really descriptive," is just the beginning.

7. Ask the writer questions that occur to you as you listen or read. Is there anything you would like to know more about? Questions may be to clarify something puzzling, to corroborate an impression you have, to ask why the writer did a particular thing at a certain point, or in the spirit of "Say Back", to check if your understanding or your response gibes with the writer's intention.

   A good combination of describing and asking will often cause the writer to think out unresolved problems of composition or even to think further through the original ideas and perhaps think of a main point or another different point or line of argument. Your questioning and describing can often start writers revising as they talk with you about what is written so far.

8. Let the writer take charge. This may occur at any time in the group session. Let the writer asks questions that he/she wants responses to. Encourage writers to acknowledge what they are worrying or wondering about in what has been written so far. Direct suggestions are more appropriate now, if the author has asked for them.

9. Take a what-if approach when making suggestions. Help writers test what they have so far by seeing what difference it would make if you changed something, added or deleted something, reordered some things, shifted emphasis, etc. While stimulating creativity, this approach may also help a writer to see weak places without feeling criticized.

REMEMBER:

SHOW THE WRITER YOU CARE -- YOU ARE INTERESTED!

LISTEN

TAKE NOTES

SAY BACK

DESCRIBE

ASK

WRITER TAKE CHARGE

TAKE A WHAT IF APPROACH TO SUGGESTIONS

THE RESPONDENT DOES NOT EVALUATE

WRITERS OWN THEIR WRITING

(With thanks to Perl, Elbow, Moffett, and students)

4-15

CASE STUDY -- A MODEL FOR YOUR CLASSROOM

by Len Schutzman
Shoreham - Wading River High School

Students can gain a great deal by doing case studies of their fellow students. Case studies unveil the writing process, help to bring the students closer together and make the writing groups function on a more intense level. The following is a brief model for case studies I have used in my classes with good success. It is done in three parts.

Part I. The Case Study -- a Portrait

In pairs, students find out about each other, mainly through interviews, and write a general biography of their case study person. Besides general information the biography should focus on past school experiences, attitudes about writing and the first remembered writing experience. The portraits are shared within the pairs throughout the writing process as they would be in a writing group.

Part II. Drafting -- An Analysis

Taking published authors' manuscripts in successive drafts, students are taught to analyze the revisions. This is done by listing the changes between drafts in a short section, discussing what effect the change has and speculating as to why the author made such a change. This is done as a whole class activity.

Part III. The Writing Process

As they did with the published authors, the students now focus on their partners' writing process. Taking a creative piece of writing their partners produced, including all drafts and process entries, the students examine how their case study subjects write. They explore their partner's composing process and the specific revisions in a particular section. The final goal of this portion of the case study is to write a paper on the subject composing process. These pieces are also shared within the pairs thoughout the writing process.

Parts I and III result in papers that are not only interesting to the case study partner, but to the writing groups as well as the entire class. Part II results in an analytic skill useful in writing groups and in the discussion of literature.

Try it. I hope it works for you and your students.

4-16

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THIS COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH EFFORT CONTACT:

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Shoreham-Wading River School District
Shoreham, New York   11786
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4-17

CREATING CONTEXTS FOR WRITING:
WHEN STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND RESEARCHERS STUDY THE WRITING PROCESS

presented by

Dr. Sondra Perl
Audre Allison
Diane Burkhardt
Ross Burkhardt
Nancy Wilson

with

Walter Caskie
Margaret Coughlin
David Ecklund
Teresa Hannan
Megan Holden
Sandra Kroeger
Christine Nystedt
Jeff Rotella
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Sue Scheld
Kevin Sloane
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TEACHING WRITING AND THINKING:
NEW STRATEGIES IN A TIME OF CRISIS

Bard College
January 21, 1983

4-18

FROM THE STUDENTS: WRITING AND LEARNING

Thinking about how writing helps me learn reminds me of looking for a pot of gold under a rainbow. I know the pot of gold isn't really there, but I would like to believe it is. I know that learning is there. It is not imaginary because I can reach into my mind, write it down and touch it.

****

Usually when I have a question and write about it, I sort of answer the question on my own and realize that I knew it all along. I just needed something to help me get it out. When I write I'm able to be more aware of what I know.

****

In Math I could not understand percents. No one knows this, but in my private journal I kept writing what was in my head about percents. I wrote about the problems without doing the work, just writing about it. Eventually I was able to put things together so I could understand it and learn it. I know that I will always remember percents because of writing about it.

****

If I listen to something and then I write what I understand from it, I know I understand it. When I read it over it makes me realize that I do know what I am talking about. Whereas if I listen to something, then walk out of the room, my mind is full of a bunch of things and then I just push them aside and forget about them. I'm sure I remember some, but just how much I'm not sure. Writing about what I've learned helps me to organize it, so that it's not just a mess of ideas in my head. When I write about it, I can also see what I don't know.

****

Suppose I had a journal for every class and I always wrote about what I learned that day. I think that I would definitely learn Math, Science and French better. When I'm writing something that I don't know anything about, I think by asking questions, making guesses, and just 'babbling'. This is a different way of learning for me.

****

You said to do freewriting on the topic of rebeling. I thought to myself, "I don't know anything to write about this," but I began to write anyway. What happened was very strange. My writing asked me questions and told me answers. It seemed to be alive.

4-19

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THE PROCESS MODEL AT WORK - Aspects of a Writing Classroom

Ross Burkhardt, 8th Grade English Teacher
Kevin Sloane & Andrew Weir, 8th Grade English Students

THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

In my English class students write regularly on topics of their own choosing. Twenty-seven students in one class, twenty one in another, began writing on the first day of school and have written on countless occasions in many modes since then. Students have written essays, poems, stories, newspaper articles, business letters, interior monologues, dialogues, journal entries, free writing, and more. Often we use a REHEARSAL - DRAFT -REVISE - EDIT - PUBLISH approach. On most occasions I write the same assignments that my students do and share my writing with them, just as they share it with each other.

REHEARSAL

Before assigning a piece of writing, I present examples of that mode to my students. Sometimes these are pieces written by students in previous years; sometimes they are examples culled from magazines, newspapers, or anthologies. A class discussion about a particular mode, say an interior monologue, helps students understand the possibilities and the limitations of that mode as they rehearse their pieces. My students keep process journals in which they document their composing processes, and I encourage them to "rehearse" their pieces by writing about what they want to write about before they begin composing. These prewriting activities have been of considerable help to the students in enabling them to write in different and unfamiliar modes.

DRAFTING

Students produce drafts of work. They know that they do not have to have the piece perfect, completed, and polished in a rough draft. This enables them to experiment, to venture where they might otherwise not go. A draft is a work in progress and is not considered "finished" until the author so decides.

WRITING GROUPS

Students share drafts in small writing groups composed of three or four students. These writing group discussions are taped (they occur all over the building) so that I can be a presence in the group and give the students constructive feedback on their discussion skills. Students follow a procedure in which the author distributes xerox copies of his piece, reads the piece twice while listeners make notations on their copies, and then pauses for thirty seconds. In turn, each listener "says back" the sense of the piece to the author, focussing on a central image or theme. Next, listeners "praise the positive," giving the author a sense of how his audience appreciates the piece. Listeners then ask "questions which extend," questions which, if responded to by the author in a later draft, might improve the clarity and quality of the piece. Finally, "author's time" allows the writer to raise questions he might have about the piece. By following these steps for each piece of writing, the students discuss their pieces, receive constructive criticism, work collaboratively, and get a sense of how to revise.

REVISION

Following a writing group discussion, a student will revise a piece of writing based on the feedback he received from his writing group. Often, just reading the piece aloud to others is powerful enough to provide the writer with a sense of

the strengths and weaknesses of the piece. Students also detail revisions in their process journals, engaging in writing about writing as they pay attention to their composing processes. Revisions are taken back to writing group for future discussion until the author determines that the piece says what he wants it to say. Once a piece is "done," the author then goes through an editing process with his group, dealing with issues of grammar and mechanics.

PUBLICATION

Students "publish" their pieces for real audiences. A "Letter to the Principal," an article for the school newspaper, or a "Letter of Appreciation" all have specific audiences. In my class we create class booklets, anthologies of student writing in which each student contributes a piece of his own choosing. Later this year we will create a class poetry anthology, and in the spring each student will create his own "magazine." This booklet has a theme, at least six original pieces in at least four different modes, a forcward, an "About the Author" piece, and a cover. Students receive fifteen copies of their booklets for family and friends. The pieces in this booklet all go through the drafting, revision, writing group, editing process. When a student knows his piece of writing will be read by a larger audience than the teacher, he invests more of himself in that piece.

OBSERVATIONS

Students in my classes enjoy writing. They feel good about what they produce, and they have a sense of "ownership." I am clear that I am working towards the following goals:

- -- that students learn a process approach to writing
- -- that students learn to draft and revise their pieces
- -- that students learn to discuss writing in writing groups
- -- that students publish their writing

My students have taught me many things about writing during the past three years that I have used a process model approach. Among the more significant things they have taught me are the following:

- -- that when allowed to choose their own topics, students write with more interest, creativity, and enthusiasm
- -- that eighth grade students can have meaningful discussions about their writing
- -- that process journals, pre-writing activities, and writing groups are techniques that enable students to write
- -- that paying attention to the content of the piece - the ideas being communicated - is crucial when first responding to a piece of writing
- -- that given a comfortable enviroment in which writing is taken seriously, students gain "ownership" of their writing and come to understand their composing processes

What I am also aware of is that when my students write in the context described above, they are engaged in thinking about writing in powerful ways.

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KEVIN SLOANE -- PROCESS JOURNAL EXCERPTS

November 9, 1982: (Before)- I really don't know how to write a poem. I never wrote one before. I see all of these different ways to write one. I guess it isn't hard if he just gave us the assignment in one night. As for a topic, I have a lot of ideas. I still don't know what exactly I'm going to write it about. I see a stove, a cabinet. I might write a poem on the life of something. I'm looking out the window -- I have an idea.

(After) - I just finished my third draft of "Clouds," my poem. I like it a lot. I especially like the first paragraph. I don't know too much about poems so I don't know what reaction it will get. I sat down and started brainstorming. I looked out the window and saw the clouds over the sunset. I had a lot of lines come into my head. I put all the separate ideas in a column and put them together. It took longer than I thought it would.

December 3, 1982: I did it. I finally got satisfied with my poem, "Clouds." I got the idea to do the whole poem rhyming. My writing group didn't go so well so I came up with the Idea. I asked the members of my family which they liked: the old one or the new. They liked the new so I kept it. I had some trouble finding rhymes with "time" and "clouds" and a few others. I changed a lot. I think the second verse sounds mixed up. I don't know.

ANDREW WEIR -- PROCESS JOURNAL EXCERPTS

November 9, 1982: I wrote this poem after school as soon as I got home. I took the ideas from the side of the paper and put them into form. I wrote the poem non-stop. It was pretty easy to write because I didn't put it in any order or rhyme it. Only one line in the whole poem rhymes but I like that. I think the poem form is good. I thought to change it a couple of times but changed my mind.

December 2, 1982: After two writing groups on Tuesday and Wednesday I decided to finish this poem. I actually used three drafts: two sentence form and one like a free writing piece...When Mr. B. gave us this assignment of writing I decided to do something about war. War is a very strange and weird topic to me. I wanted to be a soldier when I was a little kid, but then when I started to understand it better I was thinking to myself, why become a soldier and take a step for man in a negative direction when you can become a peace maker and take two steps in a positive direction?

On this piece of writing I had a lot of mental drafts. Before my first draft I thought of several ways to express my feelings on this poem. I could do it in chronological order or I could design a poem just about modern day warfare and weapons, but I think I did the best way possible to express my feelings in a poem. I don't know if people noticed the feeling I am trying to express. I didn't realize this at first but my poem is telling a hidden message. This message is that war is stupid, we can all live in peace if there was no greed. War is murder and murder is a crime, so why can't we stop fighting with each other and learn to live in peace.

This is my third year in the middle school and I have read many student publication magazines,and I get the sense that students are trying to express emotion in writing, and that's what I tried to do, and I think I did it.

WAR

When did it start
Killing, fighting and being scared
It never ends
War
Young men sent out to fight
Going to die:
For their country?
For a politician
They'll never know
War
It makes no sense
Killing other humans
What does it prove?
War
Guns, tanks and fighter planes
Hydrogen and atom bombs
Nuclear ships, subs, and sattelites
Killing innocent people.
That's quite alright
War
Who will be the next to die?

by Andrew Weir

CLOUDS

The clouds come in different shapes and sizes,
rolling slowly by,
sometimes connecting,
drawing out a painting in the sky

The clouds are forever unpredictable,
sneaking up on us when we thought we had forgotten,
one day the skies will be clear
the next covered by (what looks like) Giant balls of cotton

Only noticing them in storms,
when looking grey in every way
dropping rain occasionally
wondering what the clouds will look like the next day

by Kevin Sloane

LEARNING THROUGH WRITING IN SOCIAL STUDIES

presented by: Diane Burkhardt, 8th Grade English/Social Studies Teacher
Megan Holden, Jeff Rotella, and Jennifer Squires, 8th Grade Students

INTRODUCTION

Writing is a valuable tool for students and teachers of Social Studies (or Science, or Math, or Spanish, or Literature, or anything else for that matter). From my own experience it is true to say that I have too often used writing to have students tell me what I already know. "Answer the questions at the end of the chapter." or "Write a report on ______." Or (on a test) "Write an essay explaining three causes of the American Revolution."

This presentation is about having students write NOT to tell me what I already know, but to discover what they know and understand, what they have learned or are in the process of learning about a given topic.

SOCIAL STUDIES JOURNAL

My students keep a Social Studies journal. All "assignments" which involve writing are written in the journal. I have vowed to keep the journals free of the type of assignments which produce identical answers from every student. Thus, I have given up "write-the-answers-to-the-questions-at-the-end-of-the-chapter" type assignments. It's a joy! I collect the journals and respond to journal entries on a regular basis and find that I have much more energy and enthusiasm for reading these than I ever could muster for the old identical response type of assignment.

The following are some examples of journal entries that we have written thus far this year:

--at the beginning of a unit of study: FREEWRITE ON THE TOPIC OF COLONIAL LIFE, OR REVOLUTION, OR STATES AND CAPITALS.

--at the end of a class lesson: WRITE WHAT YOU NOW UNDERSTAND ABOUT PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SOURCES, OR COLONIZATION.

--Look at the four different paintings of "The Battle at Lexington". WRITE YOUR OBSERVATIONS OF THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES, THE QUESTIONS THAT COME TO MIND.

--Compare the maps of North America in 1700 and in 1763. WRITE YOUR OBSERVATIONS, ETC. WITHOUT KNOWING SPECIFIC EVENTS THAT OCCURRED, CAN YOU MAKE GUESSES THAT EXPLAIN THE DIFFERENCES? WHAT QUESTIONS COME TO MIND?

--As we read "The Crucible" by Arthur Miller: WRITE ABOUT THE CHARACTERS, or WRITE YOUR REACTION TO THE EVENTS OF ACT II, or MAKE A PREDICTION OF WHAT WILL HAPPEN.

--after a class discussion: WRITE YOUR THOUGHTS ON PUNISHMENTS, BOTH COLONIAL AND PRESENT-DAY, or PRETEND YOU ARE A TEENAGER IN 1700. WRITE AN ENTRY IN YOUR DAILY DIARY, OR A LETTER TO A FRIEND OR A DIALOGUE BETWEEN YOURSELF AND A FRIEND, ETC.

When each student writes, each thinks for himself about the topic. In a class discussion it is possible to let someone else do the thinking. When reading a text, it is possible to read the words without comprehending the meaning. When students write, they discover what they learned, what questions they have, what they understand or don't understand.

When I read what they have written, I discover what each student understands. I am reminded once again that all students do not possess the same basic foundation. I realize their individual differences. I learn.

COLONIAL DIARIES: AN IN DEPTH LOOK AT ONE EXAMPLE OF WRITING IN SOCIAL STUDIES

In each of the last 10 years, the entire 8th grade has been involved in the simulation game, "Radicals & Tories" while studying the events that preceded the American Revolution. Students assume the roles of Tories (who want to remain loyal to England), of Radicals (who desire independence), or of Moderates(who do not yet have a position on the issue). After studying the relationship between the 13 colonies and England and the events of the 1760's and 1770's, all students participate in "debates" during which Radicals and Tories try to convince the Moderates of the merits of independence or loyalty. The culminating activity is a re-enactment of the Continental Congress complete with impassioned speeches and fiery question/answer sessions and a final vote to see whether the colonies remain with England or declare independence. This year they voted to remain loyal. (History was rewritten!) In the history of the game Independence and Loyalty have won an equal number of times.

Diaries. Three years ago I asked my students to keep a diary in their colonial identity in which they wrote about the events as we studied them. My main purpose in assigning the diary was to provide them with a way of interacting with the material we studied so that they could see how a colonist might be affected by the Stamp Act, the Boston Tea Party, etc.

I was astounded by the results. Students created elaborate family trees and wrote about their "lives" as though they actually were the people. They made up "colonial-type" names, got married, had children, suffered tragedies, praised King George III and Parliament, ranted and raved about taxes without representation, vandalous acts of the Sons of Liberty, etc. Even better was the obvious difference in the way my students understood the factual information as compared with their peers who were involved in the simulation, but who had not kept diaries.

Now every 8th grade student writes a colonial diary for the duration of our simulation. In their diaries they develop their political views. Radicals and Tories are alway one-sided in the way they view events. Moderates are instructed to "see both sides" right up until the time they vote in the Continental Congress.

Diary Assignments. Each diary assignment is related to particular information that has been presented and discussed in class. As students become more deeply involved in their roles, class discussions resemble colonial town meetings. No event, law, tax, or other act of Parliament is presented without an immediate outburst of biased opinion. Since each class contains Radicals, Tories, and Moderates, all views are aired. It is clear that there are at least two sides to the issue of independence. Completed diary entries are often shared in class, yet another opportunity to hear and understand the opposing views.

The specific diary assignments may change from year to year and from teacher to teacher depending upon the pace one follows in presenting the information. The following were the 10 diary assignments that my students had in December and January of this school year.

Diary Assignment #1: You are a (Radical, Tory or Moderate) from the colony of ________________. The date is November, 1761. In this first entry you must introduce yourself and your family. Where do you live? What's your occupation? A list of colonial occupations on the back of this sheet will aid you in selecting a job.

Diary Assignment #2: The date is December, 1761. In this entry you write about the war between France and England that is being fought in the Ohio Valley and up North. You also comment on the writs of assistance.

Diary Assignment #3: The date is June, 1763. The war is over. Long Live the King! And you've just heard about the Proclamation of 1763. How do you react?

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Diary Assignment #4: The date is April, 1765. Since you last wrote Parliament has passed two taxes: the Sugar Act and the Stamp Act. Tell how these taxes affect you (if they do).

Diary Assignment #5: The date is May, 1767. The Stamp Act has been repealed, but the Townshend Acts have been passed. A group called the Sons of Liberty is doing a lot of talking about taxation without representation and telling people to boycott British products. What's your opinion on all these things?

Diary Assignment #6: The date is April, 1770. The Townshend Acts have been repealed (except for a tax on tea), taxation without representation is still a big issue, but the main reason you're writing is that you've just heard about an event in Boston that some people are calling a 'massacre'. Give your reaction. What did you hear?

Diary Assignment #7: The date is December, 1773. Parliament passed the TEA ACT and you've heard about a little 'tea party' up in Boston. Are you outraged? Are you laughing up your sleeve? Are you drinking tea? What are you and your neighbors saying about this?

Diary Assignment #8: The date is August, 1775. Much has happened -- the Coercive Acts, the Quebec Act, The First Continental Congress, shots fired at Lexington, the Olive Branch petition, a bloody battle at Bunker Hill. The main thing you want to write about is the fighting, the battles? Are you alarmed about the future?

Diary Assignment #9: The date is June, 1776. You have been chosen as a delegate from your colony to the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia. Write about your expectations, hopes, fears, etc. as you look ahead to the big vote.

Diary Assignment #10: The date is July 2, 1776. The Continental Congress is over. Describe the Continental Congress. Tell the results. If you are A Moderate, tell what made you vote as you did.

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The following excerpts are from the first entries in the diaries of several students:

> "Hi! My name is Temperance Duay. I was delighted when my dear husband, Giles, handed me you with a smile as he said, 'Happy Birthday, Temperance darling.' I hope all goes well. The doctor says I'm a few days overdue and that there is a strong possibility that I will go into labor sometime this morning. My first child, Jasper, has been feeling left out the past 2 weeks because Giles has been fussing over me."
>
> (Amy Domino)

> "I've started this diary because I feel that many exciting things will soon be happening to me.... Sharing a room with Carolynne and Betty is very uncomfortable. Since Betty is 7 and Carolynne is 9, they often leave their dolls and books scattered about the floor. Since winter is just a few months away, mother will soon begin to store fruits and vegetables. I will be very busy then. Even more so than now. Right now with school, my studying, my housework and my chores outside I'm ready to drop. I would never dare to complain because Father would yell and say that I am lazy and will never amount to anything. Mother would just look at me with her coal black eyes and sigh."
>
> (Julie Muller)

"My name is Arthur Dinsdale. I am a fisherman in Salem. I live by myself and have no family. I started fishing when I was 11 and it's been my life. If I couldn't fish I think I would die of starvation or boredom."

(Brian Randall)

"My name is Jonathan Smith of Wethersfield, Connecticut, a small town just a little west of the Connecticut River. I have a wife, Elizabeth, a daughter, Ann, and a son Tim, who I named after my deceased grandfather who was an officer in His Majesty's Royal Navy. My father was appointed Judge of New Haven in 1754 and lives there with my mother. I am a lawyer in Hartford, which is ten miles away. I graduated from Harvard in 1760.

(Greg Moritz)

In the next few excerpts students are writing about the Boston Massacre:

"The most awful thing has happened. I just heard about it at the store. I was buying some flour when I heard two ladies arguing about what happened in Boston. What one lady called a massacre. It was awful. I never heard two grown ladies yelling so loud. One lady was saying it was all the soldiers' fault, that they shot five innocent people who were playing in the snow. The other lady said that the poor soldiers shot in self-defense, that they were cornered and all sort of things were being thrown including clubs. My husband says people are fighting about this all over town. I heard so many opinions I don't know what to believe."

(Jennifer McNerney)

"....It was self-defense! And some call it a massacre?! What nerve! They should be punished for using those terms so wrongly against their own God-loving people! Self-defense, that's all it was. I'd shoot too if some crazy mob of people cam at me with clubs, knocking me down, and throwing ice at my face."

(Kelly O'Brien)

".... It seems that some young boys were just playing with some snowballs and kids being kids, they threw a couple at some soldiers. The soldiers got so mad that they started shooting their stupid guns and I've heard from Goody Singer that some innocent people were even killed! Can you imagine! And they say these soldiers are here for our protection!! What gives them the right to slaughter innocent people!"

(Kim Platz)

Students evaluate the diaries.

"If the main purpose was for me to understand how a colonist lived and how he/she was affected by events, I think it helped me a lot."

"As we learned more and got to reflect on it in our diaries, I felt I could really understand how each and every event affected me. Soon it became half reality and half fantasy for me and anything I wanted to have happen could and would."

"When I would write in my diary, I would try to think like someone and write like someone in colonial times. I liked the diary, It was one of the few times I have ever liked writing. Believe it or not, at times I felt rather excited, glad, and I had a lot of fun. At times I really placed myself in a house with a wife, two kids, and a dog experiencing all the stuff we learned about colonial times."

"I actually felt like a real person!"

WRITING: A WRITING PROCESS AT WORK

presented by

Diane Burkhardt

with

Aileen Adamo
Ron Consiglio
Kristen Maddas
Jeff Rotella

NEW YORK STATE MIDDLE SCHOOL ASSOCIATION
LONG ISLAND REGIONAL WORKSHOP
March 12, 1983

4-28 770

A WRITING PROCESS AT WORK

Diane Burkhardt, Shoreham-Wading River Middle School

AN OVERVIEW

In my English classes students write regularly on topics of their own choosing. They enjoy writing and are serious about it. The major steps in the process we follow are REHEARSAL -- DRAFTING -- REVISING -- EDITING -- PUBLISHING. In reality the process is not so linear as this may appear. Sometimes it seems that all parts of the process are occurring simultaneously.

REHEARSAL

What should I write? What do I want or need to say? Who is going to read this? What mode will be best suited to the purpose I have? These are the kinds of questions that we ask ourselves as we think about a piece of writing. Rehearsal includes every thing we do before we actually begin the piece. Students keep a private journal in which they write regularly about the things on their minds and what's going on in their lives. This journal becomes a source of ideas for pieces. We read examples of many different modes: poems, dialogues, narratives, essays, interior monologues, etc. We discuss these and students think about how each may be used for conveying a particular message. Students also keep a process journal in which they "rehearse" their ideas and plans for a piece.

DRAFTING

We write drafts, not finished pieces. We are comfortable knowing that the first draft may bear little resemblance to the way the piece eventually ends up. We are comfortable in knowing that we can experiment and discover as we write, that we can write as many drafts as we want until the meaning is clear. A draft is a work in progress and is not "finished" until the author decides.

WRITING GROUPS (See page 2 of this hand out for a more in depth explanation)

We share our drafts with a group of our peers. They respond to the content of the piece. They tell what they hear in it, ask questions about parts that are unclear, talk with the author about his/her plans for the piece.

REVISING

The feedback of the writing group enables us to revise the piece. We can do as many revisions (or drafts) as necessary until the piece says what the author wants.

EDITING

When the author determines that the piece is "finished" it is then edited according to conventional grammar and mechanics. This is the first step in the process where it is appropriate to discuss such things as spelling and sentence structure, punctuation, etc. unless the author has specifically asked for this kind of assistance at an earlier stage in the development of the piece. A certain amount of editing occurs quite naturally as the author proceeds from draft to draft of the piece.

PUBLISHING

We publish "finished" pieces for real audiences. A letter to the principal, a letter requesting information prior to a field trip to Boston, a piece produced as a gift for a friend or relative, an article for the district newsletter -- these are "publishing" opportunities. In class we also create booklets, anthologies of student writing. In the spring each student creates his/her own individual magazine with a theme, several pieces written in different modes based upon this theme, a cover, a foreword and an About the Author piece. Students receive copies of their magazines to share with family and friends.

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DOCUMENTING THE COMPOSING PROCESS

by Diane Burkhardt
Shoreham-Wading River Middle School

My eighth grade students keep a journal in which they write about how they write. We call it the "How I Write Book", or "Journal About Writing", or "Process Journal". We do this because:

1. Every writer has a composing process.
2. The writer is the best source of information about how he/she composes.
3. There is value to the individual writer in becoming aware of all aspects of his/her composing process.
4. There is value to the classroom community of writers in sharing individual composing processes.

I think the best way for me to amplify these four points is to share an excerpt from a recent 'memo' that I wrote to my students called "The Value of Documenting Your Composing Process".

"You are the only one who knows what goes on within you and without you as you write. No one else can know as well as you can, and even though we all may share certain common features, I definitely believe that each of us composes in a way that is unique to us.

Your composing process includes so many things:

--where you like to be when writing
-- when you write
--the type of pen or pencil and paper that you like to have
--whether you have the radio, TV, or stereo playing
--whether you need to be alone or not
--possible worries about spelling
--continuous self-evaluation of the piece you're writing
--being picky about words
--lots of re-reading
--lots of false starts/ cross outs/ messiness
--etc. I could go on and on

When you hand in a piece of writing I have no way of knowing just what you may have gone through in order to complete it. Maybe it looks short on the page, but for all I know you went through a real struggle to get it there.

The more you become aware of about all that goes on within you and without you as you write, before you write, etc. the more knowledge you will have about yourself as a writer. This is knowledge you can use for the rest of your life. How can you know all that you know about yourself as a writer? How can you become more aware of all that there is to pay attention to? Sometimes I think that we only know what we know when we share it with others. Writing about your composing process is a way of sharing it.

Why write it in a journal and share it with me? The only way I can effectively work with you to improve your writing is if I know a lot about you and how you write-- all that which is a part of your process. You can count on me to support your growth in writing this year, but first of all I have to know a lot about it. I have to know more than just the words on the paper when you hand in a piece. We'll start a dialogue together about your composing process. I've had the experience many times of being able to remind students of things about how they compose-- things that they had forgotten or didn't realize or were temporarily unaware of.

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HOW CAN WE CREATE EFFECTIVE WRITING GROUPS?

ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS.

TRUST (With a capital T). Kids need to know that you trust them to meet in groups and to be serious about discussing their writing.

SUPPORT for the writing group as the primary means for getting feedback on a piece of writing. (If I give my feedback too soon or too often, I undermine the writing group.)

WRITING that kids care about. Generally this means that they have chosen what they are writing about.

PREPARATION FOR GROUPS.

If students have never shared their writing aloud, it's important to begin by doing a variety of activities that will establish sharing as a basic principle in your classroom. Some examples:

- stories composed aloud by the entire class in which each person contributes to the plot briefly. Sit in a circle and go around once or twice. Kids also have to listen in order to be able to contribute.
- "magic circle" sharing
- theater games or exercises
- collaborative solving of mini-mysteries or discussion skills games in which each person's contribution is essential to solving a puzzle, mystery, etc. A book called LEARNING DISCUSSION SKILLS THROUGH GAMES by Gene and Barbara Stanford from Citation Press has a lot of good ideas.
- anything you can think of that encourages cooperation, collaboration, and sharing as opposed to competition.

I also think it's a good idea to ask kids to write short pieces and share them with the whole class from the very first day of school. ACTIVE LISTENING can be introduced and practiced each time writing is shared. Begin by modelling this "sayback"technique, then have the kids take turns. Point out what you're doing in active listening and discuss it with them. (Even after groups are established, it's a good idea to plan occasional class periods for whole group sharing and active listening practice -- the mini-lesson idea).

Introduce the language of response as a natural extension of the active listening. Model a response in which you tell the author what you think his purpose was, specific images evoked by the piece, the feeling you 'got', specific words or phrases that work well, etc.

MOVING TOWARD GROUPS.

Have the whole class act as a writing group for a piece that you have written. As the author, model the way in which you would respond to the "listeners". Show the kids of questions an author might ask to invite specific feedback.

Ask several students to serve as a writing group that will be observed by the entire class. Make sure everyone has copies of the piece(s) being discussed. Discuss the group's procedure.

Put students in pairs to discuss/respond to each other's pieces.

COMPOSITION OF WRITING GROUPS.

At the beginning of the school year I like to try different combinations of kids while I'm getting to know them and their writing. (If their writing group skills are already good, I don't do this).

When I'm ready to set up permanent groups, I ask for input from the kids. We also discuss the importance of trust within a writing group. I follow their suggestions as nearly as possible in creating 3 person groups. These groups will stay together for a long time, maybe even the rest of the year. Some groups are very heterogeneous; others are very homogeneous. Groups of each type work magnificently. Mutual trust seems to be far more important than comparable writing skills. An excellent writer is not necessarily an excellent group participant.

FEEDBACK TO GROUPS.

Each writing group tapes all of its discussions via cassette recorder. At the beginning of the year I listen to the tapes after each group meeting and complete a comment sheet for each student. I am able to compliment them for the things they are doing well and offer suggestions for improving other parts of their group's procedure.

Listening to the tapes is wonderful, but very time consuming. I usually listen to about 1/3 of the tapes each week after the first few times.

I don't grade writing groups, but writing group participation is part of the English grade.

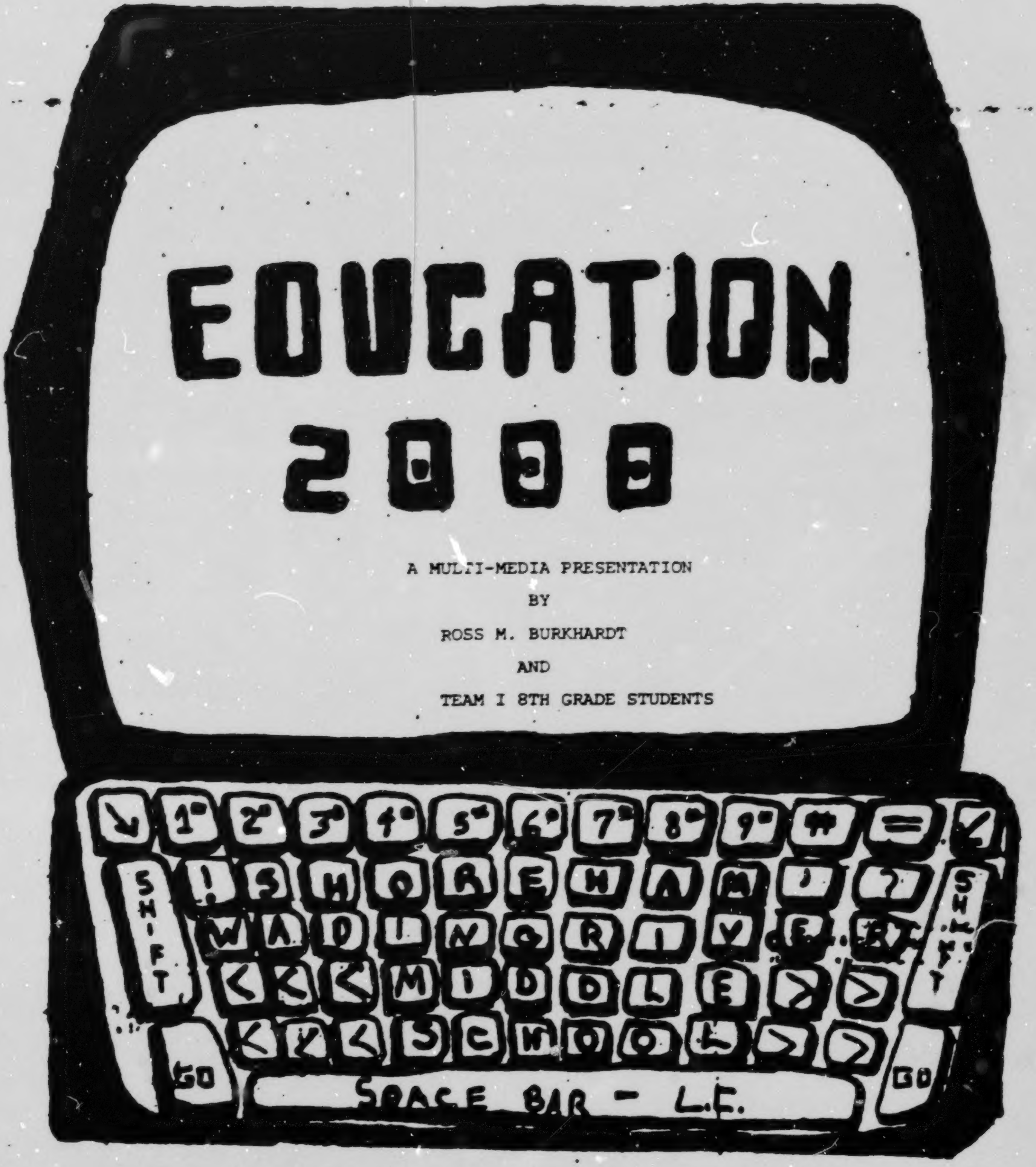
WRITING GROUPS VS. EDITING GROUPS.

Students make a clear distinction between the writing group and the editing group. When the author is still in the process of drafting and revising his piece, mechanics are not part of the discussion. When the author is ready to finalize the piece, he tells the group that he's ready for editing and they respond by focusing on mechanics.

DLB 7/14/82

LONG ISLAND REGIONAL WORKSHOP

MARCH 12, 1983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A MULTI-MEDIA PRESENTATION

BY

ROSS M. BURKHARDT

AND

TEAM I 8TH GRADE STUDENTS

SHOREHAM-WADING RIVER MIDDLE SCHOOL, SHOREHAM, N.Y. 11786

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GOALS

In developing a multi-media project with my students, I have several goals in mind:

a) to have students work creatively at expressing themselves
b) to tap the many talents of my students
c) to investigate a theme from several viewpoints and through several mediums
d) to give students a "theatre" type experience
e) to have fun

THEME SELECTION

The theme for "Education:2000" came from the conference for which is is being prepared, the April A.S.C.D. conference at the Concord. In the past, I have used such themes as American history, school, the 20th century, and problems. My wife, using a somewhat different approach, has created shows on advertising, rock music, and transescents.

You can ask your students for suggestions and allow them to go through a decision-making process of theme selection, winnowing down the many ideas to three or four strong ones that have wide appeal. Or you can select the theme yourself based on your curriculum needs. I content that a show such as this can be done on any theme - television, the family, kids, comic books, famous people, movies -- basically anything in which the students are already "experts" (that is, they have an in-depth experience with that idea as part of their store of life experiences already).

CRITERIA FOR THEME

The show needs a theme that meets the following criteria:

a) to produce it will require minimal props and scenery
b) there be a number of parts, all of which are interchangeable, so that any student can do any aspect and the show is not locked into a "star" system or dependent on the health of one individual
c) there be sufficient roles in tech and cast for all the students in the class
d) there is enough "material" available (a great deal of which already lies within the kids' heads) to write the show

LOGO AND GRAPHICS

In your classroom there are several artists waiting to desgn a logo. The logo represents the show, and thus it must be a unifying symbol. The logo gets reproduced as slide visual as posters, as t-shirts, and possible in other ways. In deciding on the logo, I asked for contributions, specifying that the title should appear in it somehow. All entries were posted, and one clearly stood out in the eyes of the kids. In the past, we have had lengthy discussions and votes to determine the logo, and in some cases we took parts of several ideas to create a "final logo." The ideas and symbolism in the logo are more important than the original design sketches, and I find that when a lot of kids submit ideas, several ideas reappear in the entries, and the symbolism of the "final" design emerges.

The graphics are important, and they allow artists a chance to do their thing for the benefit of the group. Sometimes it is important to have aunifying set of graphics through the show to lend visual continuity to it. It depends on the theme.

WRITING

The material for "Education:2000" was written in class by students. On a given day, I would ask them to write on a specific topic - computers, for example. Then, several committees would read all the papers on computers, looking for ones that would become part of the show. As committee after committee read the papers, certain student writings emerged as being "appropriate" for the show. In some cases, we edited what students wrote.

Once ten or so papers were "finalists," we then sat down and talked about which ones really belonged in the show, and in what order. The students helped here considerably. Then the final pieces were typed, and the students practiced their reading parts.

RESEARCH

Any topic you select for a show can have a research component - facts and dates and background that need to be looked up. Two years ago I did a show called "American Voices" in which fifty famous Americans were selected for their contributions to society during the past 200 years. Each student researched and wrote about one individual, and that report became the basis for the soundtrack and the spoken parts.

My wife did a show on advertising in which students went to the library and research topics such as motivation, the history of advertising, subliminal perception, and the cost of commercials. They needed the information for the script, so the research meant something to them.

COMMITTEE WORK

If you have read this far, you have seen that much of the work gets done via committees. There is an enormous amount of material available on any theme, and the process is more one of winnowing out the wheat from the chaff than anything else. Committees serve a valuable purpose in this way - they allow ideas to gain consensus; they allow ideas to combine with ideas; they allow friends to work together in positive settings; they allow groups to work on short-term, task oriented problems; and they allow the teacher to administer a crew of students in a manageable way.

SLIDES AND MUSIC

Your students already own 95% of the music appropriate for your soundtrack. Ask them for suggestions, and have them bring in records, and have students listen and make recommendations. The kids, once they get behind the idea, want the best show possible -- it's theirs, afer all -- and they will make decisions that are for the best.

I have built up a slide library over the years. Slides are reuseable - a picture of Reagan or the moon or a policeman or a sunset can be used in many ways. Also, you can get many slides from picture books in the library by using a copy stand and close-up lenses.

DO IT!

There's more that could be said, like it's a lot of hard work. But if you've read this far, you know that. Now it's your turn. Ask the kids for ideas and go to it!

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ENGLISH B
F. Burkhardt
2/10/83

1. ICW - For "Education:2000" - Topic - TEACHERS - Please write one paragraph explaining what you like about teachers (an example of them being nice) and one paragraph explaining when you don't like about teachers (when they aren't nic

2. GIFT OF WRITING - If you have not yet "given" your piece to the intended audience, it might be nice to write a brief explanation or dedication on the piece so that the person receiving your writing knows where it is coming from. Example - "This poem is your Valentine gift from me because...." or "You are a special person in my life and I want to share this gift of writing with you because..." When I wrote my story to my sister, I put a dedication in the front of the booklet.

3. FINAL PROCESS ENTRY - "Gift of Writing"

Many of you have completed the "gift of writing" assignment and have given your piece to the intended audience. I would like you to write a process entry about the assignment; please deal with the questions below, and feel free to add anything else that is important for you to say to me about this assignment:

a) how did you feel about this assignment? was it easy? hard? fun? worthwhile? please explain what you mean.
b) who did you write, and why did you write to that audience?
c) were you aware of writing for (rather than to) someone? did that affect what you wrote or how you wrote? please explain.
d) please comment on the writing group's impact on your piece and how it went. Were your concerns of last week (about who you would be in a writing group with) still present this week? was there trust and cooperation?
e) how do you feel about the piece of writing you created? please explain.
f) looking at the entire assignment, what was the most important thing that Mr. B. did in terms of helping you successfully complete this assignment? Here are some of the things he did - add your own if it isn't there!
    - share examples in class at the beginning (Xmas poems, Advisory newspaper, 8th grade farewell kiss poem)
    - ask you to do a pre-process entry last week
    - give you a planning sheet with WHO - WHY - WHAT - DETAILS on it
    - ask you who you wanted in your writing group
    - ask you to write a letter to your writing group
    - share his story about his sister by making a wall display
    - write a letter to your writing group giving you feedback on how your group functioned last week
    - spoke with you individually about your particular "gift of writing"

Your responses to these questions will help me understand the impact this assignment had on you. I look forward to reading your process entries.

Also, if you have had the opportunity to give your "gift", write about what that was like and how you felt about giving it to the intended audience.

TEACHERS: GOOD AND BAD

What I like about teachers is that they are very nice. They know what we're going through as we're growing up. They just seem to care, be funny, and are just plain nice. I really like the way the teachers work. The classes are fun, but we always learn. They teach in interesting ways. I really like the fun and happy atmosphere.

* * * *

The thing that I disliked the most was, since I was considered to be smart, I wasn't called on to answer questions. I can remember one day in social studies, my teacher asked a question. Nobody had their hand up but me. When I said that I knew the answer, he said, "I know that you know - let me ask somebody else." That got me mad, because I think that teachers should at least give students a chance. What if it had turned out to be the wrong answer? Would I ever have found out the right response?

* * * *

My kindergarten teacher had my older sister when she was in that grade and disliked her very much, so when I came along she was always picking on me. I hate it when teachers do that.

* * * *

In my first grade I had a very nice teacher. On the weekends she would let me take her little Lu-Lu doll home, and I would bring it back. One day when I was in second grade, she saw me in the halls with my friends and she told me at the end of the day to come down to her classroom because she had something to give me. I could not wait till the end of the day. Finally school was over. I ran down to her classroom. When I got there, she gave me the little Lu-Lu doll. To this day I still have it. It sits on my bed. I treasure it.

* * * *

I like when teachers try to make things really fun and try to put "spunk" into their teaching by trying to tell stupid jokes. I also like when teachers care and really try to help when you really need it.

* * * *

I don't like it when teachers favor one kid. In 3rd grade my teacher used to give gum to two kids, and when other people would ask, she would say no. That was mean and rude. Speaking of gum, my 5th grade teacher would tell us we couldn't chew gum, but then she would go and whip out a piece. That was also rude.

WHAT I LIKE BEST ABOUT SCHOOL

School should never change. I like it just the way it is. They can get better in the future, but now is now so I have to deal with the way it is. When teachers are nice and know what they're doing, that's when I like school best.

* * * *

I really like when we get a chance to work on our own, because it gets boring just sitting in a class without being able to talk to anyone. And when we work on our own we have fun talking to friends and getting the work done without a teacher leaning over your shoulder.

* * * *

I like to take field trips. I feel that they are important to have. For one thing they let you go places you never have been before, and that's a great experience. For another you have a sort of "hands-one" experience with a subject.

* * * *

What I like best about school is going to English class - it's the best class there is. It's good because I like to write stories and write other things, too. Writing about things _I_ do is best for me, but even if I'm told to write on a specific topic, it's all right for me. I guess it's because the writing is something I created and it's mine only - it's the best thing about school for me.

* * * *

Could there be something I like best about school? The bad seems to stand out more than the good, with the teachers giving homework, tests, and having classwork. They tell you to study every night and don't forget what we learned in class. But yes, there is something that I like about school. I'm with my friends for almost the whole day. I don't think that I like that best, though. I like it not very strict so I can think. I like to be able to understand and learn what the teacher is saying. I like school because I can _learn_. Learn new and different things every day. Math, science, English, social studies are only some of the things we learn. Where else could you learn so much in 12 years and more? You can't be a scientist without learning science. Numbers and figures seem to fit into place when you learn them, and school is the place to learn. I think I like learning best. I guess school does have something I like best about it.

COMPUTERS

We're in the age of a rising technology. Nowadays more and more computers are appearing in homes and schools all over the world. The Apple is a very popular computer, most computers like the Apple run on a disc. A disc is the part that stores the info. But discs aren't cheap, so most homes purchase a cassette. It takes longer to get the info, but it works.

* * * *

First you get you sheet, then you punch your code number (mine is 250), than it asks you for your first name, and when you punch your name in, it says hello, well, it doesn't talk, it just comes up on the screen. Then it asks you what course you want. Then it gives you ten minutes of problems. When you get them right, a star comes up on the screen, but when you get the hard ones right, it says "Great" or "Good," or "Excellent, Jim." The computer is like a person the way he knows who you are.

* * * *

I don't know very much about computers, and I don't know how to program one. I think that soon I will have to learn to work with them, because by the time I am working they will probably be used for many things.

* * * *

Computers -- the toy of the future, you might say. Soon everyone might have one. Computers are used in so many ways. There are the arcade games such as Donkey-Kong, Pac-Man, and Frogger. But there are also computers for learning. Some students go to a computer class in our school. They learn math and English. Computers are also used to balance books and for home use. I have one at home, though we mostly use it to play games on. Computers - some say they can think. I don't think that's true, though. Anyway you look at it, a person controls it.

* * * *

Computers - a technology becoming more popular and more advanced each day. Soon, computers will take over the jobs of men and women, and where will that leave us?

4-38

WHAT I LIKE LEAST ABOUT SCHOOL

What I like least is the pressure. Every teacher gives you homework, classwork; they tell you to study for the coming test. They put pressure on you to get your schoolwork done or you will have to stay after school or in for lunch. "Have you been studying? Have you handed in your assignment?" The pressure builds as the day goes on. Then they continue putting pressure on you by reminding you of your work - "You will hand in your work tomorrow, won't you?" "Do you know you owe work from last week and it's still not in?" I wish there wasn't as much pressure, though it's for your own good.

* * * *

I think maybe what I like least about school is textbooks. I have a lot of trouble working in them. I find them very boring. Textbooks make it not as much fun to learn. Reading out of them makes kids more inattentive. I find class discussions much more interesting.

* * * *

In school I don't really like to take tests. I don't like tests because you learn everything and then when the tests come up you get so nervous that you nearly forget everything that you learned.

* * * *

I hate homework. I think it is unfair for us to go to school all day and then you have to come home and do more schoolwork! School wouldn't be that bad if we didn't have homework. I could understand studying for a test or something, or maybe a little homework once in a while, but there should not be any homework over the weekend unless you didn't finish something - otherwise the weekend is our free time.

* * * *

What I don't like about school is it's soooo boring. Day after day you come in and do the same thing. And it's so early in the morning. I get tired of it. And the weekends are so short. Do you know what it is like to sit and wait for gym that comes only three days a week for one period? Most of the work is boring. All I can say is thank God for sports.

4-39

WHAT I NEED FROM HIGH SCHOOL

What I need to know before I graduate from high school is what life is really like outside the "classroom." Some people are so blind to life's advantages that they are afraid to go out into the world. I for one think teachers in the 12th grade, or any grade, should take some time to prepare us for the busy-ness and roughness of the outside world. I think a teacher should be straightforward and tell us life's not all fun and games.

* * * *

Two of the most important things I would like to learn in high school are a good art background and sports. Sports are important to me for a few reasons. They keep me busy, in shape, and involved. I like being involved in sports because I make a lot of friends and that is important to me. I also want a good art background because of what I am interested in doing with my life. I would like to be either a commercial artist or an architect. In order to do either of these I think you need a lot of math.

* * * *

I think one thing high school doesn't offer is courses that deal with the real world -- what it is like in the world -- the only one who cares about you is yourself.

When students graduate from high school they don't really know what it's like out there to support a family, keep a job, buy a house, pay taxes, and, after all this, enjoy leisure time.

I think a one year simulation game of life where students can pick their occupation, age, home, family, etc. would help. This should be a fun and mandatory class for seniors, because it would prepare them for life in the real world.

* * * *

I don't know what I need to know before I graduate. I don't know what to expect in high school. The only thing is, I want to graduate, not be a drop-out at 17.

* * * *

When I graduate from high school I need leadership abilities, a strong body, good moral character, and to be in the top 40% of my class, and charisma. With that I can hopefully be accepted into college.

4-40

WHAT I NEED FROM HIGH SCHOOL

What I need to know and learn before I graduate from high school is what it will be like when I turn 18 and then am expected to do almost everything in the world by myself. If I'm not taught or if I don't experience it, then what if I'm not ready?

I want to know what it will be like out in the world - budgets, food, clothing, shelter, family. I really want to know what the world will be like when I turn 18 and then suddenly - I'm free.

* * * *

In high school I would like to learn typing and accounting and business skills so when I'm in college I can get a part time job or something to hold me over until I can get a good full time job. Those skills are nice to know just in case.

* * * *

I want to know what it is like to work out in the competitive world. I would like to have the chance to work on the job for a month or two before I graduate so I can prepare for the responsibility of a job.

* * * *

I would like to know how to treat and care for animals. In my future I want to be able to help animals and stuff. Maybe I can be a veternarian or something, but I know I want to be involved with animals. I have to take the right courses and stuff. So what I really want from high school is a chance to take a course that will help to prepare me for my future - with animals.

* * * *

I don't know really what to expect in life, but I can say that I would like to know how to attend an interview or answer a job application of some sort. I would like to learn about business files and things to run a store or work at one. Basically, I want to know what will be expected of me when working for someone or owning a business of my own. I want to know this before I graduate.

* * * *

I want to know how the outside world will be before I get there, because then when I get there, I'll feel more comfortable.

4-41

CONFERENCE ON COLLEGE COMPOSITION AND COMMUNICATION
Detroit, Michigan
March 19, 1983

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE COMPOSING PROCESS CHANGES TEACHERS'S PRACTICES?

"The Relationship Between Process Journals and Student's Development as Writers"

presented by

Sondra Perl
Lehman College
Bronx, N.Y. 10468

and

Diane Burkhardt
Shoreham-Wading River Middle School
Shoreham, N.Y. 11786

"The Relationship Between Literature Journals and Students' Development as Writers"

presented by

Nancy Wilson
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and

Audre Allison
Shoreham-Wading River High School
Shoreham, N.Y. 11786

4-42

STUDENTS DOCUMENT THEIR COMPOSING PROCESSES

by Diane Burkhardt
Shoreham-Wading River Middle School

My eighth grade students keep a journal in which they write about how they write. We call it the 'process journal'. I first asked students to do this several years ago because of my own experience in keeping such a journal during a New York City Writing Project summer institute. I had found it to be a real benefit. I wanted to share my enthusiasm with my students. More recently I realize that the reason I want my students to keep a process journal is because of the information it gives to them and to me about all the things that happen both within them and without them' as they compose.

1) Every writer has a composing process.
2) The writer is the best source of information about how he/she composes.
3) There is value to the individual writer in becoming aware of all aspects of his/her composing process.
4) There is value to the classroom community of writers in sharing individual composing processes.

Students write regularly in their process journals as they are rehearsing. drafting, and revising pieces of writing. I collect the journals at least once each week to read and respond to what they have written. The written dialogue that I have with each student about his/her composing is actually a form of conferencing. It's a way for me to be certain that I "speak" individually with each student about his/her writing each week.

Students use their process journals for a variety of purposes. At times they write about the conditions of their writing environment:

> *I've got my tape recorder on and I like it. I feel more relaxed with it on. I'm leaning on the wall on my bed in my room. My bed is in a corner so I can lean against the wall and hang my feet over the edge of the bed. My light is on. It is over my right shoulder. My hand is hurting so I just changed the grip. My right hand is sweating.*

Sometimes they write about the general way in which they write:

> *Whenever I write a first draft, all the points I want to make are down but just in scrambled sentences and the paragraphs are all out of order.*

They rehearse ideas for a piece:

> *What do I write? Not stealing. That's my dialogue. Falling downstairs? Maybe. Hiking accident? In wilderness? YUCK! Too hard. Babysitting? Yea! Babysat all day. Pranks and kids are bad then at end get $20 or something. "I'm not sure if it was worth it," I think to myself. I can use that. Kids give dog a bath. Fire? Too tragic. Fall? No they get in fist fight with the boy next door. Avon lady comes leaves sample. Kids draw with lipstick all over the walls.*

They make specific plans for the draft they are composing:

How to do part 2
1. *grounded -- for week after school*
2. *tell where they are next wk. end. Wander off*
3. *Tony seemed conf. Jo nervous.*
4. *dialogue*
5. *Jo runs home.*
6. *When she gets in parents notice something wrong and try to talk to her. Ask what's wrong. No go with Jo. No talk.*
7. *After thinking about Tony for a while that night she thinks that he'll probably leave her alone now that he's been turned down twice.*

Often they write at natural stopping points as they are drafting a piece:

> *I've got so many questions about how I should write this, where should I start what kind of a kid is this kid? I feel like it's definitely not flowing, it's choppy city! I can't write like a 6 year old. How is anyone going to know the difference between when he's talking to the reader or a character. This doesn't feel right. I'm making it up as I go along and I never do that.*

After writing they reflect on the draft they have completed:

Argghhhh
too long? time wise
too much description
in some parts
too little in
others.
Too much cross
out
too sloppy
too much concern
about what other
people will think
too little concentration
too much thinking
about time
too much thinking
about a certain
person.
Argghhhh!

They write as they revise:

> *I'm really stuck on this piece. I tried revising but I couldn't get going. There are so many suggestions from my writing group that I want to use and I also hate the ending. If I'm gonna' have Tony kill himself I would make it Tony's story and make Jo a minor character ...*

They evaluate:

> *I'm back. I just finished the piece and towards the end it had a lot of emotional feeling to it. It's great! I love it.*

To me what's most important is that each student use his journal in a way that is most helpful to him.

EXCERPTS FROM STUDENTS' READING LOGS

Audre Allison and Nancy Wilson

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS ABOUT BOOKS

I wonder why the book had five different books in it. This book was the first I seen with books and chapters.

Steve M. A Farewell to Arms

I can tell there are going to be lots of big words I don't know.

Suzanne, The Great Gatsby

I can't really understand why it rained all the time in the story. Everytime something happened it rained.

Steve M. A Farewell to Arms

Boy, the story line jumps about. One minute he talks about Daisy and Gatsby, then, there's a conversation between Jordan and himself, then he jumps back to the garage. Why does the story jump around this way?

Lynne, The Great Gatsby

I'm certain there is some heavy symbolism when Blanche says the blind are leading the blind and then a tamale vendor yells, "Red-hot!" It sounds like danger to me.... A lot of symbolism pops up with reference to the streetcar named Desire -- how Mitch desires Blanche, Stella and Stan desire each other. Blanche desires youth and self-respect. Stanley desires Blanche to leave his home.

Suzanne, A Streetcar Named Desire

I can't wait till Daisy sees Gatsby. What will she say? or do? ...

Gatsby has a lot of love for Daisy. I'm glad. I hope they get together and she leaves Tom. I never liked him. And I don't think Daisy ever really loved him.

Gatsby seems so happy now. I'm so happy that Gatsby and Daisy got to see each other. I wonder if Daisy will leave Tom now or what? I have no idea of what will happen....

Gatsby wants Daisy to tell Tom that she never loved him. I hope she does. I hope Gatsby gets her back.

I think it's awfully strange that Daisy kissed Gatsby when Tom was right in the other room. Does Tom suspect anything? It doesn't seem as though he does. This whole thing is weird.

I can't believe Gatsby. He told Tom that Daisy was leaving him. Why does he talk for Daisy? He should let her talk for herself. Daisy said that she was going to leave Tom. I feel so sorry for her.

Why did he have to die? I wanted him and Daisy to get together. I'm so mad! Daisy and Tom seemed to mess up everyone's lives. And they ended up with no problems, but the people they were involved with died. That's a real shame.

Lynne, The Great Gatsby

OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS ABOUT WRITERS' CHOICES

Nick and Daisy cousins. Why did F. Scott do that? I don't think it was a good idea. I didn't like the way F. Scott delayed on the information on people and who they are like Jordan Baker, the other lady mentioned in the beginning of the book. She has to go to some tournament, but F. Scott doesn't tell her what for. That bothers me....

Greg, The Great Gatsby

As I approached the climax of The Sun Also Rises I couldn't help thinking, that in 40 or 50 years I could be acting like Ernest Hemingway and looking back on my life to write a similar version of the statements of my existence....This discvery made me realize what Hemingway was doing. He wasn't writing for my benefit but for his benefit. IF I liked his book and brought his book it was a bonus, but the main purposes of writing it was to satisfy his inner self and his own mind.

Emil, The Sun Also Rises.

On page 134, the top paragraph reminds me of John's story, the one with the pine needles, edible,remember? I started laughing cause it reminds me too much of his story except he uses the expresion "they were all cooked," "he said it was all balls." What a thing to remember.

Edris, A Farewell to Arms

PERSONAL CONNECTIONS

Henry James allows our heroine Isabel to take on the qualities of a burgeoning intellectual at a time when women were not yet out of the kitchen. He stresses recurrently the girl's independence. Isabel has done much reading and is not overwhelmingly modest by any means. She is too intelligent and does not feign otherwise, yet one can already see how the author intends to develop her simplistic pedantic intelligence into that of a mature intellectual. This is no simple growth, one which I am anxious to see and hope to experience myself. For all her knowledge of books, Isabel is still quite naive and has yet to learn from reality.

Sandra, Portrait of a Lady

Poor Charity. I felt so sorry for her... All during the book I was happy at times when Charity met with Mr. Harney, but when she became pregnant I felt sad and I wished that her and Harney would be married. He left her, and that made me sad...

The way Charity thought-- I sometimes think that way. Like when she looked at other girls and envied certain things about them. Their richness and clothing? I loved Charity. She daydreamed, which is like me. It was Charity's first time love. She went through the happiness, the jealousy, the pain, and I went through it with her.

Lynne,

The end of the book affected me a lot. I felt sorry when Frederick did, I felt melancholic when he did. I felt excited; and finally felt I lost everything that I have when Catherine died. It was as if I were Hemingway, and I had all the experience that he had. I wanted to feel in the same way as Hemingway did. I wanted to feel the same things, I wanted to experience the same feelings. Besides this, the events which occurred at the time when I read this shaped me to behave in that way. I'd felt lonely, lost; was very sensitive too. Therefore when all these effects came together, I felt sorry, excited and lost everything I had.

Cumhur, A Farewell to Arms

Nassau Reading Council
April 1983

THE PROCESS MODEL AT WORK - Aspects of a Writing Classroom

Ross Burkhardt, 8th Grade English Teacher

THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

In my English class students write regularly on topics of their own choosing. Twenty-seven students in one class, twenty one in another, began writing on the first day of school and have written on countless occasions in many modes since then. Students have written essays, poems, stories, newspaper articles, business letters, interior monologues, dialogues, journal entries, free writing, and more. Often we use a REHEARSAL - DRAFT -REVISE - EDIT - PUBLISH approach. On most occasions I write the same assignments that my students do and share my writing with them, just as they share it with each other.

REHEARSAL

Before assigning a piece of writing, I present examples of that mode to my students. Sometimes these are pieces written by students in previous years; sometimes they are examples culled from magazines, newspapers, or anthologies. A class discussion about a particular mode, say an interior monologue, helps students understand the possibilities and the limitations of that mode as they rehearse their pieces. My students keep process journals in which they document their composing processes, and I encourage them to "rehearse" their pieces by writing about what they want to write about before they begin composing. These prewriting activities have been of considerable help to the students in enabling them to write in different and unfamiliar modes.

DRAFTING

Students produce drafts of work. They know that they do not have to have the piece perfect, completed, and polished in a rough draft. This enables them to experiment, to venture where they might otherwise not go. A draft is a work in progress and is not considered "finished" until the author so decides.

WRITING GROUPS

Students share drafts in small writing groups composed of three or four students. These writing group discussions are taped (they occur all over the building) so that I can be a presence in the group and give the students constructive feedback on their discussion skills. Students follow a procedure in which the author distributes xerox copies of his piece, reads the piece twice while listeners make notations on their copies, and then pauses for thirty seconds. In turn, each listener "says back" the sense of the piece to the author, focussing on a central image or theme. Next, listeners "praise the positive," giving the author a sense of how his audience appreciates the piece. Listeners then ask "questions which extend," questions which, if responded to by the author in a later draft, might improve the clarity and quality of the piece. Finally, "author's time" allows the writer to raise questions he might have about the piece. By following these steps for each piece of writing, the students discuss their pieces, receive constructive criticism, work collaboratively, and get a sense of how to revise.

REVISION

Following a writing group discussion, a student will revise a piece of writing based on the feedback he received from his writing group. Often, just reading the piece aloud to others is powerful enough to provide the writer with a sense of

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the strengths and weaknesses of the piece. Students also detail revisions in their process journals, engaging in writing about writing as they pay attention to their composing processes. Revisions are taken back to writing group for future discussion until the author determines that the piece says what he wants it to say. Once a piece is "done," the author then goes through an editing process with his group, dealing with issues of grammar and mechanics.

PUBLICATION

Students "publish" their pieces for real audiences. A "Letter to the Principal," an article for the school newspaper, or a "Letter of Appreciation" all have specific audiences. In my class we create class booklets, anthologies of student writing in which each student contributes a piece of his own choosing. Later this year we will create a class poetry anthology, and in the spring each student will create his own "magazine." This booklet has a theme, at least six original pieces in at least four different modes, a foreward, an "About the Author" piece, and a cover. Students receive fifteen copies of their booklets for family and friends. The pieces in this booklet all go through the drafting, revision, writing group, editing process. When a student knows his piece of writing will be read by a larger audience than the teacher, he invests more of himself in that piece.

OBSERVATIONS

Students in my classes enjoy writing. They feel good about what they produce, and they have a sense of "ownership." I am clear that I am working towards the following goals:

- -- that students learn a process approach to writing
- -- that students learn to draft and revise their pieces
- -- that students learn to discuss writing in writing groups
- -- that students publish their writing

My students have taught me many things about writing during the past three years that I have used a process model approach. Among the more significant things they have taught me are the following:

- -- that when allowed to choose their own topics, students write with more interest, creativity, and enthusiasm
- -- that eighth grade students can have meaningful discussions about their writing
- -- that process journals, pre-writing activities, and writing groups are techniques that enable students to write
- -- that paying attention to the content of the piece - the ideas being communicated - is crucial when first responding to a piece of writing
- -- that given a comfortable enviroment in which writing is taken seriously, students gain "ownership" of their writing and come to understand their composing processes

What I am also aware of is that when my students write in the context described above, they are engaged in thinking about writing in powerful ways.

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English 8
R. Burkhardt
February 1, 1983

ASSIGNMENT: "The Gift of Writing"

Your assignment is to create a piece of writing to be given to a specific audience. The audience might be a parent, a friend, a teacher, a neighbor, a relative, an advisor, a brother or sister -- some one or ones with whom you have shared or experienced significant events.

The form you select for this piece can be a poem, a narrative, an essay, a fable, an interior monologue, a dialogue -- whatever form best fits the purpose of what you are trying to say.

You should select an event that has happened that you want to capture in writing, or a shared feeling, or a realization you now understand but didn't then, or a tradition that you appreciate, or some words that were spoken to you that meant a great deal, or a memory you want to arrest in time -- some part of your experience with that audience that has meaning for you. Then, through writing, create a piece that that audience will appreciate because of that shared experience or special understanding.

Think of the pieces I shared in class: the story about exchanging names at Christmas that I wrote while overseas and had a friend read to my family on Christmas Eve; the advisory newspaper I wrote for my advisees; the 8th grade farewell kiss poem for a specific group of 8th graders last year; the booklet of poems I wrote for my family and close friends last Christmas. All of these pieces can be read by a general audience and be appreciated, but the ones who get the most out of them are the ones who were the intended audience.

You might want to create a series of poems for the members of your family; write about something that happened a long time ago with your parents and you that you remember and want to share with them as a way of letting them know your feelings; write a fictional version of something that actually happened, knowing that your intended audience will really understand the piece; create a mini-diary of entries sharing feelings about a person and tracing your relationship with that person; write an essay in which you take a position that brings a smile to the intended audience; satirize something.

There are many ways to do this piece of writing, and many forms it can take. What is most important is the following:

a) you need to select a specific audience for whom you will create the piece;

b) you need to know why you are celebrating this relationship;

c) you need to write about something that has meaning for you and for your intended audience.

Please have a first draft of this piece ready for Thursday, February 3. Also, do a process entry after you complete your first draft telling how you composed the first draft, what you noticed, difficulties, etc.

LETTER TO SELF Project
January 1982
R. Burkhardt

I would like you to write a "letter to yourself" as an English writing project. This letter will be done in several parts as described below. You can do any part in any order, but all parts must be completed by Friday, January 22.

The purposes of doing this project are:

- to anchor in time the person you are now
- to examine in writing who you are
- to do a different kind of writing task than those we normally do
- to understand yourself better
- to provide you with a document that, five or ten years from now, will have significant value to you

The several parts of this "letter to self" assignment are:

PEOPLE IN MY LIFE: friends, family, teachers, the opposite sex, my best friend, people I'd like to know, people I respect

MY WORLD: my room, my school, my home, my possessions, my clothes, the places I like to go to frequently, my allowance my pet(s)

ME, NOW: my hopes, fears, dreams, goals, problems, concerns, likes, dislikes; what I am proud of about myself; what I like about myself, what I think about

WHAT I DO: my hobbies, favorite sports, activities in school, hanging out, when I'm alone, favorite foods and snacks, my chores at home, lessons, homework, weekends, vacations

MY FUTURE: predictions; what I want to be; goals; hopes; fears;

In doing each of these parts, it will probably prove most valuable to you if you jot down your ideas before writing. You do not have to touch upon each subtopic of each part; they are included as guidelines for you. Also, if there is something of concern to you that you want to write about that is not on the above list, please go ahead and write about it anyway. This "letter to yourself" is for you, and it should deal with the things in your life that are important to you.

I will collect each part as you complete it, and the completed "letter to yourself" will be kept in the middle school safe until June, at which time it will be returned to you.

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ENGLISH 8
Authors' Week Reading Assignment
R. Burkhardt
April 12, 1983

In preparation for Authors' Week, you will read a book by one of the two authors scheduled to visit our classroom - Paula Danziger and Betty Greene. You are expected to read in your book each night and complete it by Wednesday of next week.

In your process journal, I want you to write five "reading"journal entries as you read the book (write more if you want to). These journal entries should deal with your reaction to the plot of the book, to the characters, to the author's style, to what the book makes you think about, etc. Here are some possible sentence beginnings for entries in your "reading" journal (also know as your process journal):

When I read the book, I thought about...
I felt that...
I wondered why the character...
it reminded me of...
I didn't understand the part when...
I wondered why the author...
I'm not sure why...
If I were the author, I would...

These are suggestions for beginnings of sentence. If they help you, please use them. If you have other ideas about how to start your journal entries, please use them. Essentially I am interested in reading your reaction to the book, the plot, characters, etc.

I am not seeking any special kind of reaction other than the reaction you have to the book as you read it.

THIS IS NOT A BOOK REPORT. Please spare me an account or retelling of the plot.

The minimum number of entries in your "reading" journal is five (5). I suggest hat you write one on each of the following nights:

Tuesday night, April 12
Wednesday night, April 13 *
Thursday night, April 14
Monday night, April 18
Tuesday night, April 19

* I will collect your journals * on Friday 4/15 [redacted]

The purpose of you writing these "reading journal" entries is to have you think about the book as you read it and both stimulate and record that thinking by writing down your thoughts. Enjoy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

4-51

THE WALDEN SCHOOL

Monday, April 25

(Question to ponder: Could there be such a thing as a full day workshop on writing without the participants being asked to write?)

PART I
WHAT TO WRITE: You can write on a topic/theme of your own choice, but we do suggest either of the two following topics as possibilities:

(1) Write about an early experience with writing that you recall.

(2) Think about the age and grade level that you teach. Write about an experience or memory from when you were that age or in that grade.

You will have the opportunity to share what you write this morning, but no one will be forced to share if he/she chooses not to do so.

Because of the relatively short amount of time you will have for writing, it is quite likely that you will not "finish". Don't be concerned with finishing or with polishing your writing. Consider it as a first or rough draft.

PART II
CONSIDERING THE PROCESS: BEFORE you write, AS you are writing, and/or AFTER you have written be aware of how you are 'composing' the piece that you are writing. On a separate piece of paper it would be helpful if you would jot down a few notes about such things as:

-- what you are aware of (or not aware of) in your surroundings
-- distractions (physical or mental)
-- mental pictures
-- feelings
-- what stops you or 'blocks' you (if anything)
-- where your ideas come from
-- anything else that comes to mind

In general this is an answer to the questions, "How was it to write this morning? What was it like? How is it going? etc."

THANK YOU.

4-52

TEACHING WRITING AS PROCESS

Sondra Perl
Herbert H. Lehman College
City University of New York

Canadian Council of Teachers of English
Montreal, Canada
May 11, 1983

4-53 797

FROM THE PROCESS JOURNAL OF CHRISSY T.

March 22, 1982

I want to try writing a poem now. I have come up with an idea which has been in the back of my head for a week. I haven't written about it yet because I was already working on two pieces. Today I feel as if I should write about this idea because it has been lingering in my mind to long.

I want to write about my eyes. I have come up with a sentence that I want to base this poem on, "My eyes are my windows to the world," but my problem is that I don't know what else I could write from this sentence. Maybe I can write about what they help me to see - both bad and good things. I don't know what I want. Try writing, this is what I'll do. Then I can sort out my problems later.

What is another word for ugliness? I've written a little bit of my poem and need a word for ugliness. Look in the dictionary. Disgusting - nah. Unsightly - no. Repulsive - I like this word. I will use it in this draft. If I revise this poem I might try a new word.

I have completed my first draft of this poem. Does it have any potential? I don't know. I want to take this to writing group. I want to see if I should do something with this poem. Should I go on or is this piece hopeless? I like the idea the poem is based on but the poem sounds a little blah. I want to figure out how I can spice it up a little. Do you understand what I mean? I want people to think about it after they read it.

April 3, 1982

I have been sitting here watching T.V. knowing I really should write something, right now I am just wasting my time. I was staring at a painting today, wondering where the painter ever got the idea to do it from. How did he know which colors to put where? I am always amazed at how people think of things that seem so complicated to me, things I would never dream of.

I am wondering if I could write about artists and how they create. What would follow it though? How would it end? I don't know what may grow from the bottom of this idea. I have been giving it a lot of thought. I do have some sentences in my mind that may fit into a piece about artists. I want to mainly focus on painters.

His paintbox holds his innermost thoughts and emotions.

April 12, 1982

I thought about the ending to this piece a lot before I ever wrote it down. Now after reading it, it sounds like it was one of those brush-off endings. The kind you write if you just want to end a piece. The kind that sounds like you have not put any thought into at all. But I like the idea of the ending. I don't know if I should try to "drag" it out so it sounds like I thought about it. This might sound boring though. I have tried dragging out endings before and all I do is repeat myself. I make the ending worse. Maybe I should leave it the way it is. I really need to see what other people think.

FROM THE PROCESS JOURNAL OF JEFF O.

May 3, 1982

This is my writing for tonight. I want serious help. Maybe even a scheual that you could set up for me. I'm kind of desprete. Every afternoon before boarding on the bus, I say ok no homework, except English. Yes, but what do I do for English! No, I don't want to do that piece. That could be good except for that one part. I don't think I'm putting off revision, or maybe I am in my subconcious mind.

Also my piece I wrote resently, I entitled it people. It doesn't pretain to alot of people and I'm afraid that people will think that I dont know what Im talking about. Im not afraid that people will say that its gay or I am, just that people might say Im not correct in some parts.

I have more friends than I thought in the other wings. And maybe Im thinking too much of what people are going to think but my friends in the other wings might misinturpt the message and think much differently of me.

Now right now you might be saying "but ffej I thought you didn't care what people think?"

I don't care what people think to a certain extent.

Take the first paragraph of my "people" piece. I say "I may not dress like the common jock." If you think of it that's a terrible thing to say. It's like saying, "I may not dress like the common Mrs. Burkhardt."

Now how do you feel? There are things that I'm not ashamed to get across, like when I say in the second paragraph,

"People are to judgemental of others. If you're seen with a jock, Burn, loser, you are labeled as one!!!"

Now I believe that and since I belive it, I would care what someone might think.

Some things would sound good if they were just rearanged. 4 paragraphs away is something about judgemental which should be after the second.

Also I keep saying, people are too this, too that, people are this, are that. Look who's being judgemental.

Now what I've just done is kind of writing group by myself. Now I would like some real honest feed back from you!!

There is something I have to ask you. Are you disapointed in me, angry at me, or think less of me? Like, are you going to read this and go "nice bull shit job -- now am I soposed to have sympathy for you?" Or are you going to give me good feedback like I need?

FROM THE PROCESS JOURNAL OF MARGARET C.

April 12, 1982

While I was reading this I noticed 2 things - one, is that I wrote this piece sooooo long ago the 1st draft that is, even the draft I'm working from now I wrote that on the 5th? I can't believe that. When did I do that revising? In Ms. B's room? Was it that long ago? UGGG

And another thing is that I don't even like this piece that much. There's something about it that irks me. What is it? I don't know.

What kept me from writing? A combination of composing aloud and not liking the piece that much?

What is my problem - I'm mad at myself. How long was it going to take before I realized I didn't really like this piece.

Is it just because I'm frustrated now, that I'm saying that? I don't think so.

Maybe I want to get a piece about my mom - maybe I want to write "light" things. Maybe I'm just tired. Maybe I need to find out where and when I write best. Certainly its not at 10:00 pm.

There are certain phrases and sentences in the piece I don't like. I like the beginning - but the whole thing seems like a boring story. There's no plot.

What is the point of this story?

I think it's to write something to tell my Grandpa how much I respect and think of him. Maybe this isn't the mode to use. To me a story should have a beginning to build things up, a middle where it happens and an ending that ties it up. Maybe that's why the little continuation I wrote on Tues. 4th period was sort of exiting - Giving it a twist. Making more of a plot. Do I want it to go that way? I can't get a sincere reaction down without it sounding corny. Why do I seem to be resisting so much? Que pasa? Why am I writing so big?

I'm really unsettled these days. Maybe its got to do with Spring Festival. And not enough sleep. Anxiety attacks, friends etc. I'm such a baby. Everything's got to be perfect or else I can't write. I don't really mean that, but it's been that way lately. I should stick to writing light stuff. Maybe if I could get the mag done with "light" stuff it would be easier. I dont want junky stuff that I don't care about but I just cant seem to get into something big lately like a story. To me poems are easier and monologues seem easier. Stories are always heavy for me.

4-56

FROM THE PROCESS JOURNAL OF MATT D.

April 22, 1982

I have to step up the pace. But with all the work I have been doing I've forgot about my process journal. I know I should be using it to revise but I don't have time. I get back from baseball at 10 to 5:00. Then I eat. Then do all homework and write. For christ sake I don't even watch t.v. like every normal kid in america. Too much pressure, deadlines.

I have completed my revision for editing. I did what I thought for myself to be a writing group on my own. I worked out whether to put him/her girl boy etc. Or that person, I just went back to girl. I'm sure a girl can relate to it. I'm worried about the deadline. No way I'm gonna make it.

May 3, 1982

Last week I got my first piece finalized. I also got another piece in for writing group. I did it again, I didn't make the deadlines. I won't make any deadlines because I'm about two writing group behind everybody. Now there's another piece due Friday. By Friday I'll have my second piece finalized when everybody will have three, I'll be a week behind, (two writing groups). I spend more time on my pieces. I just don't crank out pieces like most people, when you crank out pieces they don't have that much feeling.

FROM THE PROCESS JOURNAL OF DIANE D.

May 10, 1982

It is inevitable that sometimes you are going to be upset because it means so much to you. I admit that I was very upset that night with my revision. I had such deep feelings of frustration and anger. I just couldn't hold it in. And I felt much better when I continued to write an entry in my process journal. So as I was saying I don't ever want to feel that way again. It was such a setback. After that I felt kind of drained of ideas because of how I felt. Not that I don't have ideas, I do in my mind, closed away for awhile. I'm not upset that my ideas are locked in my head because I believe that my mind will know when to let them free. And when it does I'll be ready for them.

ETHNOGRAPHY IN THE CLASSROOM:

Samples of Student Writing from grades 1 and 8 and from basic writing classes in college.

Sondra Perl
Herbert H. Lehman College
City University of New York

Applications of Research to the Teaching of Writing
Herbert H. Lehman College
May 26, 1983

4-58

ROUGH DRAFT Jennifer R.

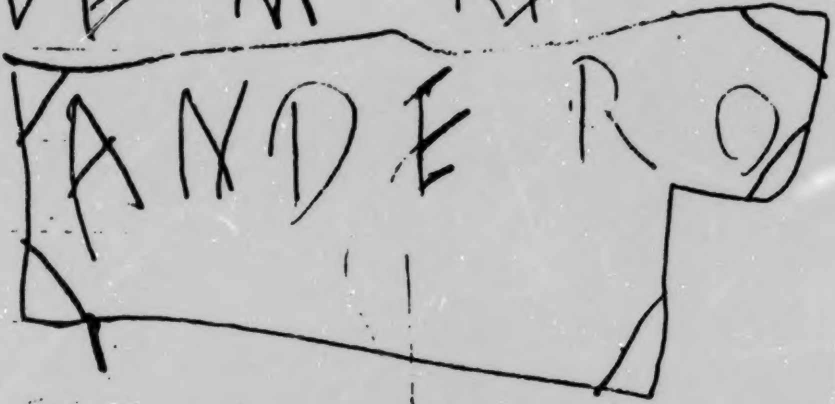
#2 9/24

IVIM ENKFARINT TFLOVE

MY FFISAROFB

I LOVE M RILOVI

ANDE ROVVDFM



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V I V Jubi #8 1/25/82 D ~~D A~~

OUGH DRAFT:

Jennifer 2

N YOUR BATe YOU HAVAHA

ND YOUR HART BOMBS YOOR

LAD AND YOU ALSO HAV LANS THEA

HALP YOU BReF AND YOU HAV

BRAN AND YOUR BRAN HAL

OU SMART AND YeU HAV BONS

OUR BONS HALP YOU STAeT

DHR

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806

#12
5/13/82

The baien and the Tige

i'm vere Tierd sed the
loien. i am to! sed the tiger
so Thea went to slep.

4-61

Wen Thea wok up. Thea wer
kcat in a net. and a bon cane a
maeus. The laien sed ta the mae
help me. the maeus chud a
the rap he brack it. The
laien and the tiger gat aut
and [illegible] [illegible] frense

Nature #18 6/7/82 Jen [illegible]

in the Morning the birds sing and i hear them. the sing a song that is so prety i cant resist it. i love it sa much. in the morni i go out in the back yard. a lisin to them. and at night

4-62

the kricte go crek crek crek. and

the froge go retop retap retop.

and i GO OUT SiDe AND

sete ander a three and

liken to theem

4-63

811

812

FROM THE PROCESS JOURNAL OF CHRISSY T.

March 22, 1982

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4-64

FROM THE PROCESS JOURNAL OF MATT D.

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FROM THE PROCESS JOURNAL OF MARGARET C.

January 21, 1982

When I sit down to write a peice a lot of things are on my mind like school, friends, Noreen, Mike, volleyball ect. So I think if I do some automatic writing (sentences or words) in here I can just concentrate on writing my peice and maybe I won't get up so much and have to talk with someone about something.

I usually talk about myself being uncomfortable what I'm going to do with the peice and I usually complain because what I just wrote is going no where or needs more revision and the W-G. gave 2,000 different suggestions to consider. I tell about distractions that bother me and I write how I get up and take 'little' 'breaks' and stuff. I usually feel depressed after I write a part of a peice (because I don't know what I want to do with it ect.) So most of my entries that are written after a peice are complaining to myself and trying out possible endings such as I did on Nov. 3.

I think if I start doing "automatic writing" here before I start to write a peice it might help me from being so "tense" if that's the word. Maybe if I clean all the junk out of my mind before I write I might settle down a little. I like that idea.

MARGARET C.

My favoret way to use my PJ is to plan and just to write like free writing.

Writing this is helping me. Now I know that the PJ is helping me. I've decided now that I'm going to do some free writing before I start on a peice.
Most of my entries before or after are of frustration but I think that's good because if I stop myself from worring about a peice I won't try hard enough on a peice and I won't like it and I'll be ashamed of it. If I push myself it will get the peice the way I want it.

I think I know pretty much where I like to be when I write, I know I want to be alone, I know I don't want to have time and pressure on my mind and I like to move around and be alone. All this is working so far.

All of a sudden this year I've gotten interested in writing. I guess I never knew the process of writing a peice was so complicated once you get into it.

I would just like to say that I do get many joys out of writing. Not so much joy but satisfaction. The satisfaction of knowing, I worked hard on this, I'm proud of it and people like it also.

There are certain points when I'm stuck and then I get an idea and the feeling I get is such releif it is in a way a joy. The way ideas just come to me sometimes gives me joy if that is what you would call it.

Put it this way - When the knot in my stomach unties its joy.

4-66

EXCERPTS FROM THE PROCESS JOURNALS
OF BASIC WRITERS

Linda M.
10/80

As I sat in class to write about the ERA, I found myself knowing that I was going to write it over when I got home so it really didn't matter how messy, unorganized or not complete it was. I thought about the ERA a lot and realized a lot that I never did before. It was very wierd, some of the things I wrote. When I picked this topic I didn't know at all what I was going to write, but things just started coming to me.

Lynn W.
11/80

I am writing about racial prejudice and how it affects children. It is a challenging topic because it has two sides. I want to show just how important the parents are to children from the ages 1-7 and how they can teach their children to deal with these things. When talking about people who have dealt with racial discrimination, I want to just take myself out of the paper altogether and speak for people in general, especially for parents. It is really hard, but I think for the sake of my writing it is important. Unlike my first two pieces, I want this to be more factual than personal. I want to present my thesis, give facts, give my sources, take myself out and be objective.

Pat T.
10/80

Oh no! I'm stuck! Standard English dialect is driving me crazy, have; has; have gone; have had; use-used. This is my weak point. I can't seem to knock it. I guess I will have to read about it to learn it. It sounds right to me, but it turns out to be wrong. It all has to do with past, present, and future. I get so overly involved with what I am writing that I forget about the grammar.

Jose D.
3/81

I know what I wanted to talk about. Once I saw that I was letting myself go, I encountered myself to go on. This is the first time I let myself go in a class. I wanted to write on forever. I looked around the room and saw that everyone in the class had found something really to talk about.

4/81
I started racing against the clock. I looked over the guidelines for new ideas to develop. I decided to write about single and divorced women. Each time I wrote something I read it over and over until I said, "yeah, that's it; sounds good." Each time I stopped writing, I felt comfortable with what I wrote.

4/81
As I write, I picture myself taking the WAT test. When I write, nothing bothers me. Ideas come from the left and right sides of my head, like they are loose in the air.

4-67

STAGES IN AN ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH PROJECT

Sondra Perl
Herbert H. Lehman College
Bronx, New York

How Teachers Teach the Writing Process

November 1983

NIE Grant #: G-82-0011

817

4-68

How Teachers Teach the Writing Process

The purpose of this study is to document how ten teachers who participated in New York City Writing Project summer institutes on the writing process translate what they have learned into effective classroom practice. This group of teachers, ranging from grades 1-12, work in the Shoreham-Wading River school district on eastern Long Island. In the first year of the study, three of us (researchers Perl, Wilson, and Carter) spent an entire school year in schools collecting data. In the second year, out of every three weeks, we spent two weeks analyzing data and one week back in the district, observing classes, meeting with teachers and checking our perceptions. This year, our third, we spend the majority of our time writing.

Raw Data

1. Field Notes
2. Teachers' Journals
3. Student Writing
4. Teachers' Writing
5. Interview Notes
6. Researchers' Personal Journals
7. Study Group Notes
8. Audio and video tapes of selected writing classes and writing groups

4-69

First Stage Analysis

1. Calendars — put data in chronological order
2. Time Sheet — gave us an accurate count of hours and days spent in classes
3. "Thinking Aloud Memos" — brought each researcher to begin formulating themes and patterns by answering the question, "What do I know about this teacher/ this class, so far?"
4. Logbook — served as a record of common themes that emerged from discussions among the researchers
5. "Portraits" — provided an occasion to sketch the relation between teachers' journals and classroom behavior by answering the question, "What matters to this teacher, and what forms do these concerns take?"
6. Teachers' written reponses to our preliminary analyses and their reflections on the study
7. Students' written responses to our preliminary analyses
8. Papers written for conferences
9. Detailed narrative accounts that combined field notes, teachers' journals, and student writing in one notebook, so that we could see the relationship among the different data sets (for three teachers)

Second Stage Analysis (in progress)

The objective is to produce a comprehensive report for the profession. The key questions presently guiding the choice of method and form include the following:

1. What's more important, common themes or teachers' differences?
2. What's more important, the categories we've arrived at or the integrity of each teacher's classroom?
3. Are there "key" classes, similar to Geertz's Balinese cock fight, in which we can see many or all of the characteristics of a particular teacher at work?
4. Can research be written as a story?

4-70

STAGES IN AN ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH PROJECT

DATA SAMPLES

Excerpts from Teaching Journal (Doubts) 1

Field Notes, September 24, 1981 2-4

Thinking Aloud Memo #1, October 27, 1981 5-7

Thinking Aloud Memo #2, December 30, 1981 8-10

Interview Notes, reaction to Memo #2 11

Calendar, February 8 - March 12, 1982 12

Excerpts from Teaching Journal (Doubts) 13

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Excerpts from Teaching Journal (Reports on Classes) 15

Field Notes, February 24-25, 1982 16-18

Portrait of R.B. 19-22

Doc. (Teaching Journal of R.B.) ①

[illegible]

The creeping doubts than gnaw at one's vitals are at work on my insides. Am I doing the right thing? Have I gone too fast? Do the kids understand process? Should I have assigned a process entry at a time when they had no idea of what it was? How do I get kids more into writing and taking responsibility for their writing? How do I avoid the slap-dash approach that I felt too many of my kids used too many times last year? Do I use grades and mark them down, merely because their priotities are not congruent with mine? I was disappointed in yesterday when not every kid had both a piece of writing and a process entry in a journal. But then I remembered Diane's advice about Theo -- look at what you have. And at the end of the day, of the 41 students in my English classes, only five kids did not have their work in, and of these, one was absent, one was new to the school and understandably confused, and the others claimed vociferously to either have left it home or to not have understood. So why am I beefing? Or am I? I'm not really sure. I guess I wanted 100%.

9/16

Am I too strong a writer to provide a good model for kids? I think I write well, and I have a facility with words, and I know how to do it. Yesterday I passed around FOG DOG in all four drafts, and I shared the four process entries with the kids. One of my purposes was to show them my process, to share with them how I did my assignment, in hopes that they will see a model and take parts of it as their own and proceed apace. But Dennis used to caution me about being too forceful in a discussion, and I wonder if I am too strong as a writer, too together in my approach to be of value. Is this conceit, or is it real? I do not know. Can Toscanni instruct budding musicians? I guess so. What if I scare them off, though? There is always a risk in anything one does. That's what makes it fun -- taking the risk.

DAY 12 Sept. 24, Thurs. (25) — Girls; then Craig; girls; Ross; boys

R. wearing beige v-neck sweater over blue shirt, blue pants, wallabees.

Exp A., I walk in, kids in circle. Seat next to Becky is vacant. I take it.

R: On sheet, sim. to act. we've already done — builds on skill, helping others + you w. your writing. W. abt. s.t. one direction, not wander too much. Know we are sharing. [illegible] slightly Diff. fr. before. Take abt. 10 min. + write, you can pick topic, you can make it up, or [illegible] I call factually-based.

9:36 R. starts writing; B. + Sh. ask me if I'm writing. I say normally I do, but I'm w. so much all day that prob. I won't. They look around, most everyone is w. on notebook paper; using pencils, pens. B + Sh. ask me what the assign. was. I tell them [~~fath~~ this is funny cause I know it ~~cause~~ since I've written it down in my notes.] Chris next to me has 3/4 of a page; Craig is watching Kerri; Barbara has her head down on the table; so does Trina; R. motions to Greg to stop drumming on table. Room is basically quiet.

9:47 kids getting restless. sitting back in chairs, whispering.

R: take another min. + finish up thought or idea you are working on.

As R looks around room, we smile hello + he mouths, "J.M." — a few kids are still w. —

Piece of w. is first draft; rep. s.t. even rougher; not construed as best piece of w. — yet any piece is act of commun. One goal get ideas across to another person. One way to see if you've done this is share w. another person. Like to ask S. to help me out in this. We will model s.t. Ask you to do sim. act. I will read + she will say back what I've said. This is s.t. in order to work, have to listen accurately.] Try again now —

R. reads; I listen + my asst. on his piece —

School so far

kids - good sense - pleased -

comf. patterns -

goal accomp.

patt - order - like them

Someone pts. out they've done this before. R. agrees + adds that it takes practice. We will —

As I finish, R. turns to Greg + Lee. — they have been fooling around, leaning back on chairs;

Ross: I'm disappointed when I'm trying to give you models to look at. I don't consider my job a game or school a game. I'm upset - you're putting me in mood - 2 people not paying att., rude, disruptive. Is that accurate?

boys: yeah; R: Unfortunately, takes me out of piece I'm rdg. I don't like to send people out of classroom — now, there's door — You want to say anything? boys, no response but also looking away.

I'm serious abt. what I do. Get to school at 6:a.m. If you people will focus on job – we will improve, get an awful lot out of me & others in classroom; 19 of you – 1 of me – you know collectively far more than me. If you fool around, it's disservice to your neighbor, class, me. That's pretty straight out. You know expectations. See e.g. have just demonstrated what they are not. No right to destroy someone else's ed. Wrong. Absol. wrong. He looks for moment at e.g. When – ake heavy speech takes a while to get back sense of happy mood. when all kids look like [illegible] – some smiles – I love to laugh – have a good time. I don't like to put up w. "tom-foolery;" rudeness; when someone talks, others should be listening. Priority. Greg. think There's the door. I'd just as soon not have you in here for rest of class per. I repeat. But – we'll discuss it later. Greg doesn't move.

G. leaves. R: He's upset. I'm upset. Price – maybe he did not do s.t. so wrong – I have certain standards – you've got to listen. If

* there is ever "a time to be serious," it's when someone rdg. his or her w. – Hardest thing – last year – girl wrote [illegible] Halloween [illegible] – "share w; games;" ripped me apart. One grl. rdg. – beautiful piece – boys out of line making jokes & laughing. When discrep. you forfeit that right. Nothing more impt than respect for others. You don't play games, you don't take someone else away. Mark this moment on people's mem. indelibly. I don't want to say this again. No Q in your mind. Expectations. Live up to them. Life is like that. Everything you do has consequences. John and Gray – smile. I feel better abt. having said that. Anyone want to say anything? No reaction. OK we move on.

You've got to listen, too

If I haven't done my [illegible], I see [illegible] finish [illegible] doesn't [illegible] girls [illegible] him [illegible] how could [illegible] handsome.

Back to listening. R. asks me to read. I say I haven't done a piece but I can read f.n. grl: Jamaica [illegible] what you wrote. Ross listens – details, patterns, clothes. I read til Greg episode. R. tells them to work in pairs. I interview – first kids chat. [illegible] if they noticed if we "listened" differently. to talk abt. difference

Kids read in pairs

-St.: good, diff. w. one or two people – person are into what you are saying –

-Tina: not embarrassed –

Chris: like it better this way. Why? I don't know.

Mike: " " " – feel embarrassed.

Ross – whole class at once – little bits; more questioning.

R. anything diff. to say? Issue of rdg. aloud & emb. – suppose you had great piece, would that emb. you? Some yes, no. R: it's nice to hear

I get to listen & Bo piece – wonderful – on [illegible] contract to pole

27
xeroxed
to here

more of this kind in
- We'll be doing both. In situation called w + p.
Man. due next week. Next week chopped off. Tues. + Wed.
holiday - claps - I will collect your pieces of w. + p.y. tom. (Fri.)
collect today's w.;
No date on paper. Who's a bozo. w/out date. (loudly)

In break btwn. pairs listening + responding, Sh., B. + I talk abt. B's piece, contrast in it; Greg - Sh. wonders where you go when sent out of class; they tell me Messina threw him out of music; we all seem to think he deserved it + that R. made imp't pt. I ask them what was going on in office this am when I came in. Some girl had "broken" (?) her wrist. They felt office help were not helpful. I mention quickly that I won't be here tom. (Fri.) cause I'm going to N.Y. where I live. + I'll see them next week. No time left to talk after that.

At end of class Ross says, well, that's the speech. + not understanding - say that pt. obviously got across. We talk for a few more min. I ask him for his teaching journal. He gives me 2 books + introd. me to his Eng. I students (now in their seats) as "his teacher" who's now taking his journal.

[- Later on, R. finds Gregg + talks to him. It turns out that it's his b-day + he's overly excited. He also felt R. was correct in ~~[illegible]~~ sending him out of the room.]

4-25

⑤

Thinking Aloud Memo #1 October 27, 1981 Ross Burkhardt, 8th Grade

What have I learned about this class, this teacher, so far?

Ross uses everything about him to teach -- school incidents, anecdotes about students, my presence in the classroom, his own interests, the 90 or so posters suspended from the ceiling and covering the walls, news events, a lot of poetry. As a result, all of the objects in his room carry some special significance -- from the Darth Vader poster called into use on Day 1, "You think he's bad? You don't want to find out what I will do if you don't bring a writing implement to class," — to the multi-colored signs on the writing process that appear and are pointed to as Ross introduces a new concept. Even chairs and tables are used to indicate particular activites -- writing and reading aloud are done at tables formed into a large circle, with Ross joining the group as a member; poems are recited into a microphone in front of the room to students seated in three long rows; didactic lessons have chairs and tables turned in one direction facing the blackboard; writing groups meet in three's and four's at individual tables. On one morning when I arrived early, Ross, busy rearranging tables into a circle, explained quickly, "I like to have it organized before they come."

Once students arrive, they may spend time writing (often a ten-minute free writing exercise), sharing their writing (pieces they are working on for homework and/or their process entries), talking about the writing process, listening to Ross' writing, studying and reciting poetry, learning how to respond to each others' writing or learning how to prepare pieces for publication.

Except when students are asked to write a letter to him ("Write me a letter about your writing program last year and your goals for yourself this year.") or to Dr. Bell ("Write a letter to Dr. Bell about the changes in the school this year."), Ross does not assign topics for writing. Free writing is used as a way of helping students discover something they can write about, but generally a piece of writing is assigned and students develop their own ways of handling it. To help them see how writers discover what to write, Ross often talks about his own writing, indicating how events and perceptions in his life become the source of his poems and stories; for example, in explaining two poems he had written he mentions the dead cat on the L.I.E. and the stray dog in the morning fog — "Woah, I gotta write about that," he tells the class. Ross also states quite emphatically, "Want to see me go crazy? Crumple paper and throw away drafts. Do you know why? In that paper may be the seed of the best writing you are going to do." The point is made over and over again — everything around us is the source of our writing.

4-76

During the first few weeks of school Ross establishes routines. Everyone will write, including him ("If I give you an assignment, it's important for me to do it, too"), writing will be shared (by Day 3 everyone has read something to the class), and everyone's writing will be respected. One thing Ross will not tolerate: noise when someone is sharing a piece of writing (If I have a value, it's silence." - Day 10; "If there's ever a time to be serious, it's when someone is reading his or her writing." - Day 12). The day Ross asks a student to leave the class because he is making noise while another student is reading, Ross tells the class "to mark this moment indelibly in your memories so it won't happen again."

By the seventh week of school Ross prepares his students to work in writing groups. Until now, they have practiced active listening in the large group (with Ross and me modeling responses), they have read pieces to a partner and they have read their articles for the DNL in groups of three. Now, to prepare them for independent group work, Diane has ~~Ross has~~ devised & Ross has agreed to two plans: in one class Diane, Ross and I train a group of students in a "holistic response" to writing on one day and then become a model writing group for students on another (Di and I responding to a poem Ross has written); in the other class, Di's students come in and spend two class periods "training" Ross' students in writing group techniques. One of our future interests will be to see how well groups function and how closely students follow our modeling and advice.

Other things we also need to look at more closely include revising, the use of process journals and the idea of ownership. After Ross introduces the idea of revision to students (Day 6), Frank asks him, "Why should you write about what you've already written?" Ross recognizes the dilemma and answers in terms of his own revision of him poem, Fog Dog. But will Ross' taking revision seriously be enough of a guide for his students to take it seriously? Similarly, Ross is serious about the notion of ownership. On Day 5, he asks rhetorically, "When does stuff get finished?" and answers, "I can't give you a rule. You decide. You have to be satisfied. You are responsible for your writing." Again, we have to wait and see whether, how and at what point students begin to feel responsible for their own writing. On Day 18, Ross tells the class that he is not pleased with the entries in their process journals. He brings two new signs into class on the writing process and writes long comments in students' journals. Another new focus: whether, how and at what point the process entries begin to change.

more like [illegible]

Finally, there are several things that come across clearly in this classroom:

1. Ross is comfortable in his room: he moves about it frequently, occasionally standing outside the circle of students with his hands on someone's shoulders; sometimes kneeling down next to students talking quietly or joking with the group; at other times crossing from one side of the circle to the other just to make a point.

[illegible] her kid
a louder

2. Ross' love of poetry forms a part of the fabric of this class. This begins on Day 1 with the Team I meeting which Ross opens amid music and fanfare by reciting a poem and continues with his frequent sharing of the poems he is working on and the poetry recitations every few weeks (even he and I do them).

3. Ross shares with the class not only his expectations of them, but his pleasure when they live up to his demands: after kids read aloud on Day 1, he says "I thank you." After a process discussion on Day 3, he concludes class with "Thank you. I thoroughly enjoyed this." After the first poetry recitation on Day 7, "I was pleased with your support and participation. That's important to me." And after reading some BUMP journal entries (a social studies assignment), "I really enjoyed reading your BUMP journals. I learned so much. You were an incredible audience."

So far, I've learned that Ross' statement "Everything is grist for the mill" is realized in this room. Events are carefully orchestrated, an early experience serves as the point of departure for a later one, reflection is ongoing. In this room Ross composes not only writing but also a world.

4-78

Thinking Aloud Memo #2 Notes on Ross' Class December 30, 1981

MAJOR EVENTS

A class publication was completed by Parent Conference Day - November 20, 1981

To do this, writing groups became editing groups; typed copies were proofread; Ross wrestled with the problem of "correcting" student writing that was technically "incorrect". He decided to leave it the way the author created it and let the authors learn the notion of being responsible for their own work.

Letters to authors were exchanged

Students wrote to two people in Ross' class and to two authors in Diane's class. I have no data on what happened when they received them. Any response? Did they save them? (How did kids view this activity?)

BUMP has become "Life's Tough, Ain't It?"

Activities have been moved into English class. Kids working intermittently on committees, slides, logo, etc. Interesting discussion about whether logo should be "cute" or "serious". Kids divided on this. Not resolved yet, I think. Ross expresses "nervousness" about committee work . . . when he's not sure what kids are doing. Interviews introduced here. On one of my visits to social studies, Ross interviews me as model for kids.

Also when kids are discussing possible logos, Ross reminds them that the show is their's: "If you spell it TUFF, you're going for cuteness, I think. It's a choice you have to make. You are kids making this. You will have to live with it for the rest of your lives." (Day 50)

DNL

One piece due for DNL after Thanksgiving. Done in one week span with one writing group (I think). (I did not see any of this writing because the Deans and David S. were here.) (3 kids published - Becky, Bob P., Debbie Horton)

Work on PRCT's

Practice writing sessions occurred the last week of December. Kids wrote business letters, reports and essay. Some were exchanged for proofreading. Sample reading passages were also done. RCT's scheduled for first week in January. Rob, reading Ross' letter, jokes, "I'm going to smoke you."

Poetry Recitations

Three were done since last memo. Two memorized. One read from scripts. Shruti, Becky, Frank and I did "The Raven".

Ongoing Writing Assignments

Kids continue to write in class -- ten minutes free writing, an occasional exercise ("describe something in slow motion"), process entries continue. Between ICW's and homework, about one piece per week is due.

On Ross

He continues to make slide shows (for Bay Area, Strotman and Dartmouth), writes in his journal, is encouraging Don Strotman to use writing in science, does research with case study kids, continues to write poems and share them with his class and/or eighth grade team, goes carolling with students, attends concerts, wrestling matches and volleyball games at school, maintains a conscious concern that the Middle School not lose sight of its mission, dines with the Deans, and graciously allows all kinds of visitors into his classroom.

Questions he has come to so far include:

How do I get kids to really care about what they write?
Are kids only producing perfunctory pieces?
How do I conduct a writing conference?
Why do I know to do 3, 4, 5 drafts without feedback?
How did I learn that?
* Is it me, Ross Burkhardt, students write for or is it Bay Area that is clear to them and allows them an audience and a sense of power?
I have not resolved whole thing about writing groups or about the teaching of literature. What happens if kids get "addicted" to my comments on papers? What effect on model?

Continuing Themes (Some of these are themes in his journal which appear as statements/comments in class — theme in journal is actually grounded in class - can be seen in his behavior)

Ross using himself as model; sharing his own feelings, perceptions and thoughts.

When he makes a mistake doing a poetry recitation and kids laugh, "I don't laugh at you . . . I'm a person before I'm a teacher." (Day 33)

When he's not sure of something: "I feel discombobulated. Too many things going on. You know, car in winter, wheels spin and don't go anywhere." (Day 52)

On David Smith's observation of Ross (arguing freely with kids; bending down on knees): "I was cheered up by his observations. You made me feel good." (Day 58)

On Christmas dinner: "Arthur touched my heart (said in relation to reading passage) at dinner last night." (Day 67)

Writing Process Concepts

On BUMP interviews: "We're learning about our audience, parents, teachers who will see it." (Day 36)

On BUMP title: "You will have to live with what you decide. You are the kids making this." (Day 50)

Actions have consequences/discipline

This activity (editing groups) does not work if you change your mind. You need to stick to what you tell me. You have to respect me and your classmates if you say something. Lee messed me up . . . Becky, other, didn't have copies. I bust my a-- butt (laughs) getting things done. I expect the same from you. I'll point it out when you don't do it. (Day 37)

(Kids making too much noise - not paying attention) You will have your time. I want mine. I don't think I'm asking too much. I get upset. I'm a human

4-80

(10)

being. You cut me, I bleed. I'm like you . . . Strive to keep a good relationship. I don't like being put in a bad mood by kids who are disrespectful. (Day 38)

Acknowledgement

I had incredible reading experience over the weekend. Thirty-six process journals and forty colonial diaries. "My hat is off to you. You did a wonderful job." Ross reads to them from his journal. (Day 48)

"I was pleased with your writing. Nice to see 2, 3 drafts, different modes. One person wrote that Rob B's poem was an inspiration. (Day 53)

On colonial diaries - "I love what you did, Frank, it's super. Kristy read yours. Yes, it's wonderful." (Day 54)

On poetry recitation: Basically, I was pleased. You worked on dramatic expression, more people put humor, sadness in there. Hearing it was good. (Day 58)

Writing as Therapy

I noticed some kids have been mad, upset, confused. Have used writing. I'm like that. Sometimes I'm so mad, I have to write it cause I can't trust myself to say it. Then I throw it away. I'm not angry anymore. Craig agrees - "Yeah, I wrote two pages once . . . I hate my mother." (Day 53)

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

My Questions:

How to sustain kids' interest in writing, move from perfunctory to impelled?
Is it useful to incorporate free writing as a base?
Is it useful to incorporate other techniques? - mapping (R suggests)
How to resolve literature issue (what is it?)?
How to resolve writing group issue?
What will happen in Radicals and Tories game? Will writing other than colonial diaries be done? Should any be done?
What's happened with writing in science? Is it different for English?

4-81 830

MN → - how decide w. to self assign.?
* · I want ad R+T sketches

68

Talk w. Ross - reaction to Memo #2 1/18/82 at school 4th per.

- comes off too nice -

I've had trouble holding it tog - felt somewhat overwhelmed.
sense of incompleteness - things haven't gotten done -
lurches + bumps don't appear in memo.
keep up "facade" to kids - mostly so they see org. but I have a sense that I'm losing stuff.
Today. I didn't feel hassled - sometimes I feel out of touch w. kids - today, no I talked w. each kid.
Waiting for Fri. - have own kids + time back -
This R+T since Nov. - gone on long this time -
Vac make it seem longer.

On LTAI ..
infuse kids w. perspectives - some people will come in + talk, next week.
prob: # of activities vs. deepening writing -
R: What do I do then?
→ I mention that if I were to do active listening w. memo, first thing that would hit me is # of activities. Memo shows what has occurred. Now we need to look at it in rel't to his Q's.

Schedule changed. Will do work in progress at Conference, not the whole show.

Ross open to seeing how current structure contributes to sedentary w. - not enough connections made or enough support given during prew..

We begin to think thru next steps. He smiles at my switching out of strict ethnographer role. I say, I've given thought to it + it would be phony not to share my concerns, thoughts, work w. him since our Q's + goals are the same. He says that I've given him a new way to view the things in his classroom + that what I've said fits w. what he knows abt. what he is doing.

I feel like there's lots more to explore. lit; poetry forms; themes; not how w. come from his view. Also that I'm doing my job, reflecting what I see, + I sense he will think abt this + come up w. a plan of action.
Also - we didn't yet talk abt. his central Q - is it rem or R.A. the words?

CALENDAR, FEB. 8 – MARCH 12, 1982 R.B.

	M	T	W	Th	F
8	93 ooktalks & CLM test	94 kids in gps – selecting skills; group them wtg. list to music; R "so much to do"	95 kids in gps – (9 t. w. Lenny S.)	96 more gp. work – Lord of the Flies	97
15	Winter Vacation				
22	98	99 R- angry when Barb H. sits outside of circle – I leaving reasons for things... Thank you letter to someone do free wtg. assoc. to thanks. Reminds R. of poem – no regrets – - intro. idea of "perf." wtg. - some wants to share poem – R angry "I don't like you"	1 person msg. 100 R – "Shoe" comic strip – one on wtg. "beads of sweat" – R. shows / R rds. "Impelled Poem – done wl SG – I'm feeling pressure abt. the show – R has some typed copies of wtg. for show – kids in gps – not much gets done –	101 who's next time? R Rds. his letter to R Kaplan / dis process. some kids say this was rough – not so boring. "how bring movement to wtg.?" long. dis. of trust – R thanks them.	102
3/1	103 R on Wash. D.C. trip R. has lousy time on trip.	104 Wash. D.C. trip (we talk → j. entry more personal)	105 announcement – Bump and Theirs. Some time to write – Nicole saunters on – props boots on floor – (R. being conciliatory w. kids today)	106 I'm at MLA (Chris Macduct) →	107 MLA
3/8	108 (workee) talk w. R. at night w. R. – tired, depressed, "no special skills"	109 inc. frustration – cond. things. brick by brick – rehearse skits – – repeat; hard work	110 (Montauk)	111 t-shirts / "I can't do everything at once" / yells at Barb H / yells at gp – "act your age" " Tired of dealing w. babies" – memor. script for show / posters	112

Doubts (Teaching Journal of RB) ⑬

1/29 The heat is back on at home -- the pipes unfroze, and we have opened the heat flaps, and the temperature downstairs seems abnormally warm -- we had been doing the heat wrong for all these years we were there. And Katie called with good news about California, and Elza's call also cheered me with news of Theo. So I was in a good mood when I got to school. ~~But~~ how quickly things can change. I discovered that someone has cut the ends off of the earphone sets in the back of my room. The big mike jacks are missing from three or four sets of earphones, and for that matter, a number of earphones are missing as well, I believe, It sickens me to think there is a kid or kids who sit there and wantonly destroy the stuff in my room -- I need to share that feeling with the kids. Then also, the folder that has pieces of writing in it that the sub was supposed to leave is not around. I immediately leap to the conclusion that it was tossed away by ~~a kid~~ -- why? I don't know what makes me think this -- perhaps it is the discovery of the cut ends on the earphones that did it -- because there is a set of earphones out on the tape recorder where they weren't yesterday. Thus, someone knows something about that and how they got there and why. It may be related. All I know is that I have no sub report from yesterday, and it was clear that the woman was going to leave me one (Debbie Fletcher's piece of writing was in the folder, and other kids were done and probably handed in stuff). So now I do

[illegible] [illegible] because [illegible] again

Yesterday's group was a blur -- I spent the whole time trying to exorcise a real tense depressed feeling I had, an overload at work undone or pressing upon me. The poem ("IMPELLED POEM") is now in draft four headed for five. It is getting close, but there are still shades of meaning I want to put into it. But it did serve the purpose of allowing me to feel better because I was honest with myself and the pain I feel on occasions.

One note I wrote to myself yesterday -- "I feel badly that I'm not living up to my image of myself" -- by this I mean the image I have of myself as a superman, capable of doing twenty things at once. I keep piling on tasks and responsibilities until the legs creak, and then I feel badly because I am overloaded. I have only myself to blame.

4-84

(14)

IMPELLED POEM

I have not penned a poem these many weeks.
Think not my muse has wandered off and died;
Rather, pressures heavy from without
Blocked rhythms seeking exit from inside.
A tense, uneasy feeling -- unrelaxed
Anxiety clenching gut and limb --
Now pervades my being, braced and taut.
Horizons once seen clearly have grown dim.
I live in fear of not achieving goals
I've taken on. Why am I afraid?
In my head I know there's nothing wrong
With missing several steps in the parade,
But in my heart, the pain does not subside
And give me rest. My need is real:
To stop and shape ideas more frequently
And capture how, poetically, I feel.

4-85

Reports on Classes (Teacher's Journal)
(RB)

BAJ - 2/22/82

That sick feeling in my stomach is with me as I begin the day. I have no definite plans, although with "Twelve Angry Men" in, I can see that at least half my day is accounted for. God Bless the Movies.

I want to have the kids do a letter of appreciation and really get into it. This is something they have done in years past, but always I am looking for ways to increase the commitment of their writing. I was thinking about discussing the term, "Thank You," in class beforehand, to get them to think beyond the mechanical response aspect and really search out someone who did something for them and tell it like it is. Too often I feel kids do not go deep enough into themselves, and their writing thus is not "impelled." Maybe no matter what they give me, I will want more. I guess I may never be satisfied -- an interesting thought. At any rate, some rehearsal in class beforehand before giving out the assignment seems to be in order.

BAJ - 2/24/82

The "letter of thanks" idea seemed to go over fairly well, although in some cases kids did not have an idea of who they were going to write to. Eng. B turns them in this afternoon, Eng. A tomorrow. I just wrote both of mine -- to Sondra and Bob Kaplan. They were fun to write and made me feel good -- I hope the kids get the same kind of feeling from them that I do. I was very aware when explaining the assignment that the task was meant to create "impelled" writing. I used the word "perfuctory" in class to describe the "Hi, how are ya" greetings people extend to one another as they pass in the halls, knowing full well that they are not seriously interested in the person stopping and going running down exactly how they feel. So I hope that the kids will have a chance to really share something from deep inside themselves with another person, as I did.

Yesterday in English A the issue of trust was raised -- I started chastising people who did not share what topic they had decided to write about for the letter of thanks. Nine people in a row said "I don't know" and I firmly believe that they were merely afraid to trust the rest of the group by sharing what they were feeling. A couple of people did share, but fewer than I thought. Afterwards I felt badly about not having been nicer about it. I also yelled at Barbara Harris and Kevin Carey for not sitting in the circle -- at this point in the year, I want them to do that and they should know it, and so I got upset when two didn't do it. Later in the day I also yelled at Chris Bach, who was fooloing around and being deliberately distracting when I was talking to a group of girls and trying to get them set off on tasks. I reamed him out in the hall and shared with the class my displeasure. But given the pressures on me that I feel from not having LTAI done (and that I feel is the real cause of my anxiety), I wonder if I was overly critical of a small thing. I don't know -- sometimes things like that are easy to take, sometimes they are a pain. It depends on my mood, I guess.

4-86

Wed. Feb. 24 DAY 100

R: 1 person missing - kids: grey?
How many of you read Shoe? (comic strip). R. not my favorite -
Doonesbury, Peanuts, Apt. 3G - kids - no -
rds. comic strip - W. is easy.... Beads of blood appear on your forehead"
W. is difficult - can be tiring.
I've been doing a lot of w. lately. - 16 letters last sat. - comments in
your journals - my journal. Haven't done any creative w. lately.
Yesterday I wrote a poem. Sitting where he was sitting - our wkg. gp.
'I haven't penned a poem in weeks' The truth - I've liked that
line - I'm feeling pressure abt. the show - you kids should know that -
did first draft in S's class yesterday - then 2nd draft - typed it at
home - this a.m. 4th draft - R. reads poem - kids quiet.

R - wrote 2 letters to 2 people - I sent them this a.m. - feel real good abt.
that - People in Wash. thing - met at 11:15 today.
I also have typed copies of people's writing for the show - need to
rd. thru them + make decisions - on tape, done aloud, etc. I
haven't typed up every single piece. When you are done, pass to
your left.
Cray, A. J., + Tina working on Individual - (they don't get much done -
the task seems too large, no one takes charge - they don't make
any decisions or have any serious discussions.)

Thurs, Feb 25 DAY 101

R: who's not here. Becky? Kristy? only 15 or so kids here.
What I want to do is check off your letters (15 min.).
sits on stool - drs. abt. 2 yrs. ago - rooms - Mr. Kaplan - had La Valle's
room - I had K's room - kids: who was here? R: Dorsey -
Cray: Mr B, you did all this to your room in 3 years? R: in one day -
take it all down at end of year - strike the set, so to speak
Mr. K. & I did a number of things together - I wrote the following
letter - R. rds. letter to Bob -
R: he said, Thanks, - already some t's telling me they got letters fr.
kids -
how was it to w. this piece - what kind of exp. was it?

R: Nicole, how was it? N: I don't know. R: mind set the same?
N: different, w. abt. what happened.
R: Steve? S: a letter.. R: Kevin? K: abt. the same.
R: everyone have this response? I thought it wld. be diff. B: no.
Barb: better than other pieces - never thanked people, this was opport - could put w. feelings out on paper.
R: Was this more imp't than other w.?
B: yeah. this was good - I don't know - not like facts to Dr. B.
Kristy: it was easier.
Diane: . . . — got to pick who you wanted. With person in mind, know what you want to write.
Kristy: w. piece of w. it's due: this is an excuse
Tina: not as boring as w. another piece — this is s.t. you want to do....
R: on bd: Investment. Kerri, what abt. you?
K: good - it helps you to feel good - told someone you are grateful.
R: what abt. task of w. letter? put more into it? K: yeah.
R: wait til I finish -
K: not like a story where you have to think abt. it.
R: didn't you have to choose your wds. w. care?
K: yeah,
Chris: took me a while to do it
R: didn't do this before? C: yeah. R: ~~[illegible]~~ harder? C: yeah.
R: Mike? M: I don't know. R: If you don't, who does?
R: was it diff? M: yeah,
Sh: (vol). It was like letter to self - s.t already happened -
R: what I had asked - was to avoid - (on bd.) perfunctory w. - where you have to do s.t. to hand it in. I really feel that w. is an imp't means of commun - I wanted you - pleased to see it did w. some - get away fr. perf - do s.t. that mattered - Rem. poem - yest - for me, real investment in that - I was feeling bad - had to deal w. that - capture that. When w., how bring that investment to writing? What does it take? Anyone know? (few seconds of silence) -

R: Rob? R: like a diary entry. Ross: did you do it w. investment. R: NO.

Kristy - when read to whole class - just do it - when to one person, more of yourself

R: on bd. "You hide yourself." R. sits in FP for a moment.

Frank: people might laugh.

R: What K. is saying,

Tina: you don't know how they'll react.

R: people agree w. Frank?

R: is your w. dishonest? Kids: NO - R: Then what is it? not what you feel; to one person, it's more honest.

Idea letter to self is more honest.

Diane: not dishonest. Have to mean it to give it to someone - in spare time, won't write a piece.

Kerri: letters are personal. Don't want to w. personally - don't want others to know.

B: more emot. involved w. letter than in piece abt. pollution.

Kristy: piece of w. is surface - letter is deeper - you're not trying to make it meaningful.

S: could you make w. more " ? Yes, no. Jan: s.t. don't want to share.

R: people we haven't heard from

Gina: people don't want to share w. whole class.

R: Jan said, people could, but won't.

Mike: I write abt. trip I took - no investment. R: why do it?

kids: have to. - get D's -

R: just raising Q's - not critical - you all know me by now - Do you think I'll give you D's?

Talk abt. grades.

R: other question is - Tina: are you saying we don't have to w. pieces?

R: what I wd. like is for you to do W. impt. to you.

Kristy: I won't spill my guts to whole class.

R: is my w. honest?

K: you don't write abt. stuff you don't want anyone to know. Not dishonest if not personal.

Darlene: you want to read.

Jaime: no one will make fun of you in hallway.

We strike the
set next Tues.
signals (end of school
to L)

Portrait of R.B.

Ross loves to perform. He shines when standing or sitting on a stool presenting an idea to a rapt audience of students. His shine turns to sparkle when he sees his students building on something he has done. For Ross sees himself as "the educational leader in the classroom," as "someone who can show the way and point out how things can or ought to be done." He knows that students may not always follow his lead, but he nonetheless finds it crucial "to set an example, to be a model."

Ross' leadership, then, works in two ways. First he is an organizer, of activities, events, schedules, deadlines, performances. He arranges things for his students: the chairs in different configurations before they enter the room and the day's activities so they'll know what they'll be doing and what he expects of them.

But he is also a participant. When his students write, he writes; when they memorize poems and recite them to the class, so does he; when each kid produces an individual magazine, he'll have produced one as well. Thus, while Ross sees himself as "running the show" and as "providing structure and direction," he is also a participant in the show.

For Ross, the classroom "is a stage set and the year a play that unfolds 180 acts on a day by day basis." As director, as "the driving force behind what happens," he controls the action. As fellow actor, he performs along with his students. As seasoned veteran of the stage, he often performs first to show them how it can be done.

4-90

Thus Ross "puts on a show" in all senses of the word. He is often the first to read his writing to the class, to bring in 4 drafts of a poem and talk about his strategies for revision. He says that everything he does is deliberate; the way he moves around the room, the way he talks quietly with a single student, when he gets angry and even when he "acts unconventionally." All of this is designed to create an "open and informal atmosphere where it is alright to laugh, to argue and to have a good time."

Yet, behind the stage, Ross goes through much "hand-wringing" over the best way to proceed. As early as September 15, he writes in his journal: Creeping doubts...gnaw at my insides. Am I doing the right things? Have I gone too fast? Do the kids understand process?... How do I get kids more into writing?... How do I avoid the slap-dash approach too many of my kids used last year?

In November: "a nagging series of questions: Is Marc's piece too long? Should I let Lee get away with his copying since it's gone this far? Is Debbie's piece too short? At what point is it appropriate to intervene in the "creation" of a piece so that I teach the child how to create/shape his/her own meaning rather than become dependent on me for help?"

Later the same month: "Will the kids' writing be good? Are they producing something "worthwhile" or just "filler"? How do you get kids to really care about what they write?"

In Dec.: "I had the sense that writing groups were perfunctory, shallow and not really helpful. Kids on draft 2 were done in 5 minutes. I need to work on the skill of having them respond constructively... But how does one do this, and at the expense of what?"

The doubts and questions go on. Yet one morning Ross wakes to find himself amused at the discrepancy between his "off-stage" agonizing and "on-stage" performance: "I feel not unlike Eisenhower planning D-Day--every step a carefully measured pace toward the goal of better writing and much off-stage wringing of hands as I ponder which step of the many possible to take and why that one is "better" than another... How interesting---the hand-writing and agonizing indecision on my part and the apparently smooth appearance as seen by the kids... This two-faced situation with me aware of both and the kids only aware of [illegible]... Here is a drama being played out, unbeknownst to them, me trying to make the right decision, trying to think of what is best to do...and here they are, blithely unaware of how difficult it is for me, how I worry about it so. I assume that t's in my own days as a student were in similar frames of mind from time to time, and I neither knew, noticed nor cared."

But today, as an adult and a teacher, Ross does care and he does worry. He worries about whether he has something to offer his students and whether he offers too much. He worries about controlling what his students are doing and whether he's given them so much room they are beginning to flounder. He wants to give up controlling their actions but he also wants to feel useful.

He wants to perform but not to overpower.

Ross wrestles with these issues long and hard. I'm not sure he's resolved them yet. But regardless of the role he plays in class what is clear to him is what he wants his students to leave his class with: memories of themselves and what they've accomplished and of him. He wants to be remembered by them because memories are important to him. He loves when former students come back to reminisce about the trips they went on or the class play they performed in. Thus each year, he designs activities that involve students in creating something of their own, something memorable. It doesn't end there, though. Following a classroom activity or a school event, Ross himself will often write a poem, singling out particular students or experiences, raising as he puts it "humdrum reality to exalted status." His role as commemorator is important to him, because it allows him "to legitimize classroom events as memories" and as he says, "creating memories for kids is what a large part of my teaching is about."

WRITE ON!

presented by Diane Burkhardt, 8th grade English & Social Studies teacher at the Shoreham - Wading River Middle School, with Nancy Jo Seidler, Ken Benowitz, John Rosati, Lora Nicholas, and Jennifer Reffelt.

INTRODUCTION

Should every teacher be a teacher of writing? For me the answer is yes. Writing is a valuable tool for students and teachers of every subject. The act of putting pen to paper forces us to think and at least allows for the possibility of our ideas being expressed more clearly.

From my own experience as a Social Studies teacher, it is true to say that I have too often used writing to have students tell me what I already know. "Answer the questions at the end of the chapter." or "Complete this worksheet on the patterns of immigration before 1900. Read Chapter 12 to help you do it." Or I asked them to write to find out and summarize what someone else already knew. "Do research in several different sources and write a report on .
Or on a test I might ask my students to write an essay on the main causes of the American Revolution -- the very ones we had gone over in class.

This presentation is about having students write NOT to tell me what I already know, but to discover what they know and understand, what they have learned or are in the process of learning about a given topic.

MY EXPERIENCE WITH SOCIAL STUDIES JOURNALS

When I decided two years ago to have students keep a Social Studies journal for all written homework, it was because I was bored with reading sets of dittos or papers where all the answers were essentially the same. I vowed to keep the journals free of the type of asignments which produce identical answers from every student who has done the work correctly. Thus, I had to give up the kind of assignments mentioned above.

Borrowing an idea from my English classroom, I asked students to do freewriting on the topic of Colonial Life as we were beginning the unit, and got responses like the following:

> "Boring! My mom used to like it. Old Bethpage. Making candles. Wearing bonnets. Hate it. Take field trips to long ago places. Teachers have lots of books on it. You read about it. Long dresses. Little House on the Prairie. Guys working for little pay. Not a lot of food. Have to work hard for it. Must be boring back then."

I asked them to read their textbook assignments and write their reactions and questions to what they read.

> (After reading about young people in colonial times) "That is really different. I would not have liked to have worked when I was 7. That must have been horrible. I liked the part when they say how some 'teenagers' made the U.S. what it is today. That really makes me feel good. What I don't understand is why did they change it from being that kids worked so young to the way it is now where we can't work at all?"

I asked them to write what they had learned as a result of our class lesson and sometimes discovered that what I was "teaching" and what they were "learning" were two different things.

One thing I found out immediately was how much more energy and enthusiasm I have for reading and responding to journal entries than I could ever muster fo the old 'identical response' type of assignment.

When each student writes, each thinks for himself about the topic. In a clas discussion it is possible to let someone else do the thinking. When reading a text, it is possible for the eyes to see the words without the mind comprehending the meaning. When students write, they discover what they have learned, what questions they have, what they understand or don't understand.

As the teacher when I read what they have written, I discover what each student understands. I am reminded over and over again of the different bases of knowledge that each brings to class. I am in tune with their individual diffences. Most importantly, I learn.

4-95

FROM THE STUDENTS: WRITING AND LEARNING

Thinking about how writing helps me learn reminds me of looking for a pot of gold under a rainbow. I know the pot of gold isn't really there, but I would like to believe it is. I know that learning is there. It is not imaginary because I can reach into my mind, write it down and touch it.

****

Usually when I have a question and write about it, I sort of answer the question on my own and realize that I knew it all along. I just needed something to help me get it out. When I write I'm able to be more aware of what I know.

****

In Math I could not understand percents. No one knows this, but in my private journal I kept writing what was in my head about percents. I wrote about the problems without doing the work, just writing about it. Eventually I was able to put things together so I could understand it and learn it. I know that I will always remember percents because of writing about it.

****

If I listen to something and then I write what I understand from it, I know I understand it. When I read it over it makes me realize that I do know what I am talking about. Whereas if I listen to something, then walk out of the room, my mind is full of a bunch of things and then I just push them aside and forget about them. I'm sure I remember some, but just how much I'm not sure. Writing about what I've learned helps me to organize it, so that it's not just a mess of ideas in my head. When I write about it, I can also see what I don't know.

****

Suppose I had a journal for every class and I always wrote about what I learned that day. I think that I would definitely learn Math, Science and French better. When I'm writing something that I don't know anything about, I think by asking questions, making guesses, and just 'babbling'. This is a different way of learning for me.

****

You said to do freewriting on the topic of rebeling. I thought to myself, "I don't know anything to write about this," but I began to write anyway. What happened was very strange. My writing asked me questions and told me answers. It seemed to be alive.

4-96

LEARNING LOGS

Because of my interest in the connections between writing and learning I asked my students if they would be willing to do some research with me, by keeping a 'learning log' in one of their other subjects. 26 students volunteered to write about French, Spanish, Math, Science, Gym, or Health. They have been writing on a fairly regular basis since early February. The following are several excerpts from students' learning logs:

> [After writing a fairly lengthy explanation of graphing including charts and graphs that are hard to reproduce here] "You know, I just realized that by explaining here what we were doing today in math, I understand it better which is good because we have a test tomorrow. I hope you understand what I wrote. Now I understand it better, but I still don't see any use for learning it. Do you?"
>
> [Math] "I'm very tired today and my mind wasn't with math at all. When I first got to math class the tables were filled up, so I sat by myself which I thought would help a lot. But it didn't. I couldn't focus on what we were doing. So my mind wandered off until Mr. A asked me if I knew what they were doing. I nodded my head up and down and he went on. And I wondered if he knew I wasn't telling the truth."
>
> [Science] "We're doing a solar energy project. We were supposed to make a solar energy keeper. First we made a cone out of paper and then we put silver foil inside it and made sure that there were no holes in the cone. That's as far as we got today, but the next thing we're supposed to do is put a cup in the middle of the cone -- any cup that you think would hold the most heat in. Then we will fill it up with water and put it outside pointed toward the sun to see how hot the water gets. The object of this is to find out what width of the cone will get the water hotter. This is just guessing, but I think that it will heat up the water less if you have a wider cone than if you have a cone that is not too wide.
>
> [Spanish] "I'm learning so much in Spanish class that I can really put it into categories. I'm not only learning how to speak Spanish and pronounce the words with a correct accent, but also I'm learning the history of Spain. Right now we're learning about the Romans. I know how the Romans lived and what their lifestyle was." [Same student, different entry] "I guess it's just when I'm doing bad in Spanish class that I hate it, but to me that sounds reasonable. I kind of think though that some things we've spent time learning we don't really need to know. Like we studied and learned a whole unit about sports and how to say "Foul", "It's out" "They're cheating" in Spanish

and learn dialogues of sports and what people in the stands are saying. I think the most stupid thing of all is we had to know all the pieces of equipment. We should just first learn to be able to communicate to people in Spanish, important things."

[Gym] It's really bugging me. We just started the physical fitness test and I stink at all this stuff. Seriously! It's driving me crazy. I wish everyone in this school wasn't so into sports. I'm planning to try out for track, but you have to run around the track 1/2 hour just for starters. I can run but I've got to do it every day for about a month in order to do it for 1/2 hour straight. I can't believe how much this is driving me crazy. It's all I think about when I'm in a bad mood.'

NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES

Ross M. Burkhardt

Shoreham-Wading River Middle School

Shoreham, NY 11786

April 2, 1984

HOW TO CREATE A MULTI-MEDIA PROGRAM WITH YOUR STUDENTS

THEME - Any theme about which your students can inform themselves or are already informed is appropriate. Sports, family life, school, television, advertising, rock music, contemporary issues, and politics are all possible choices. The purpose of such a presentation is to give students a chance to explore their opinions and then express themselves.

SOCIAL STUDIES JOURNAL - My students write regularly in their social studies journals. They explore preliminary ideas, raise questions, suggest material for the presentation, criticize what has already been suggested, share concerns, and add to my understanding of the project. This use of writing often provides me with excellent feedback on how they see the "theme" and how they feel about their involvement in the project.

LOGO - It is helpful to ask students to suggest ideas for a logo. The logo serves as a unifying theme for the project. T-shirts, posters, and visuals can come from it. It also allows student artists a means of expressing their talents.

SECTIONS - Once the theme is selected, I ask students to suggest sub-sections of the main idea. They then organize and sequence them, and the structure of the show emerges. Since there are no "correct" answers in setting up an outline, all students have the opportunity to contribute equally.

SCRIPT WRITING - Once the sections have been identified, I ask students to write passages that they can read as part of the show. This allows them to write for real audiences. We revise and edit the passages several times before presentation.

SOUNDTRACK - Much popular music offers appropriate commentary on the ideas in the slide show. I ask my students for suggestions. They own many records, and so a song is not hard to obtain.

SLIDES - Slides can be reused when the show is over; thus, I have an ever-growing slide library that students look through to find appropriate visuals for the show. I also ask students to plan "triples" (three slides appearing together) so that there is visual unity in what the audience sees.

A WORKSHOP ON WRITING
AN MSSC PRESENTATION -- APRIL 13, 1984
ENGLEWOOD, NEW JERSEY

PRESENTED BY:

Diane Burknardt, 8th grade English & Social Studies
and
Kelly Green and Vashti Badal -- 6th grade
Liz Kelly and Chris Duffrin. -- 7th grade
Jennifer Costello, Justine Guggino,
Jim Cast, and Steve Misiano -- 8th grade
of the
SHOREHAM - WADING RIVER MIDDLE SCHOOL
SHOREHAM, NEW YORK 11786

NOTE: In the Shoreham - Wading River School District, more than 100 teachers have participated in summer institutes directed by the New York City Writing Project (CUNY at Lehman College) one of many National Writing Project sites in the USA. As a result of this extensive training in our district, students at every grade level from first grade through twelfth are writing drafts, sharing their drafts with peers, revising, editing, and publishing. In other words the National Writing Project approach can be followed at any grade level, with modifications appropriate to the age level.

The students who are here today represent four different teachers who have adapted the same basic principles of writing instruction to suit their own teaching styles and classroom realities.

4-100

A WRITING PROCESS AT WORK

Diane Burkhardt, Shoreham-Wading River Middle School

AN OVERVIEW

In my English classes students write regularly on topics of their own choosing. They enjoy writing and are serious about it. The major steps in the process we follow are REHEARSAL -- DRAFTING -- REVISING -- EDITING -- PUBLISHING. In reality the process is not so linear as this may appear. Sometimes it seems that all parts of the process are occurring simultaneously.

REHEARSAL

What should I write? What do I want or need to say? Who is going to read this? What mode will be best suited to the purpose I have? These are the kinds of questions that we ask ourselves as we think about a piece of writing. Rehearsal includes everything we do before we actually begin the piece. Students keep a private journal in which they write regularly about the things on their minds and what's going on in their lives. This journal becomes a source of ideas for pieces. We read examples of many different modes: poems, dialogues, narratives, essays, interior monologues, etc. We discuss these and students think about how each may be used for conveying a particular message. Students also keep a process journal in which they "rehearse" their ideas and plans for a piece.

DRAFTING

We write drafts, not finished pieces. We are comfortable knowing that the first draft may bear little resemblance to the way the piece eventually ends up. We are comfortable in knowing that we can experiment and discover as we write, that we can write as many drafts as we want until the meaning is clear. A draft is a work in progress and is not "finished" until the author decides.

WRITING GROUPS (See page 2 of this hand out for a more in depth explanation)

We share our drafts with a group of our peers. They respond to the content of the piece. They tell what they hear in it, ask questions about parts that are unclear, talk with the author about his/her plans for the piece.

REVISING

The feedback of the writing group enables us to revise the piece. We can do as many revisions (or drafts) as necessary until the piece says what the author wants.

EDITING

When the author determines that the piece is "finished" it is then edited according to conventional grammar and mechanics. This is the first step in the process where it is appropriate to discuss such things as spelling and sentence structure, punctuation, etc. unless the author has specifically asked for this kind of assistance at an earlier stage in the development of the piece. A certain amount of editing occurs quite naturally as the author proceeds from draft to draft of the piece.

PUBLISHING

We publish "finished" pieces for real audiences. A letter to the principal, a letter requesting information prior to a field trip to Boston, a piece produced as a gift for a friend or relative, an article for the district newsletter -- these are "publishing" opportunities. In class we also create booklets, anthologies of student writing. In the spring each student creates his/her own individual magazine with a theme, several pieces written in different modes based upon this theme, a cover, a foreword and an About the Author piece. Students receive copies of their magazines to share with family and friends.

HOW CAN WE CREATE EFFECTIVE WRITING GROUPS?

ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS.

TRUST (With a capital T). Kids need to know that you trust them to meet in groups and to be serious about discussing their writing.

SUPPORT for the writing group as the primary means for getting feedback on a piece of writing. (If I give my feedback too soon or too often, I undermine the writing group.)

WRITING that kids care about. Generally this means that they have chosen what they are writing about.

PREPARATION FOR GROUPS.

If students have never shared their writing aloud, it's important to begin by doing a variety of activities that will establish sharing as a basic principle in your classroom. Some examples:

- -- stories composed aloud by the entire class in which each person contributes to the plot briefly. Sit in a circle and go around once or twice. Kids also have to listen in order to be able to contribute.
- -- "magic circle" sharing
- -- theater games or exercises
- -- collaborative solving of mini-mysteries or discussion skills games in which each person's contribution is essential to solving a puzzle, mystery, etc A book called LEARNING DISCUSSION SKILLS THROUGH GAMES by Gene and Barbara Stanford from Citation Press has a lot of good ideas.
- -- anything you can think of that encourages cooperation, collaboration, and sharing as opposed to competition.

I also think it's a good idea to ask kids to write short pieces and share them with the whole class from the very first day of school. ACTIVE LISTENING can be introduced and practiced each time writing is shared. Begin by modelling this "sayback"technique, then have the kids take turns. Point out what you're doing in active listening and discuss it with them. (Even after groups are established, it's a good idea to plan occasional class periods for whole group sharing and active listening practice -- the mini-lesson idea).

Introduce the language of response as a natural extension of the active listening. Model a response in which you tell the author what you think his purpose was, specific images evoked by the piece, the feeling you 'got', specific words or phrases that work well, etc.

MOVING TOWARD GROUPS.

Have the whole class act as a writing group for a piece that you have written. As the author, model the way in which you would respond to the "listeners". Show the kids of questions an author might ask to invite specific feedback.

Ask several students to serve as a writing group that will be observed by the entire class. Make sure everyone has copies of the piece(s) being discussed. Discuss the group's procedure.

Put students in pairs to discuss/respond to each other's pieces.

COMPOSITION OF WRITING GROUPS.

At the beginning of the school year I like to try different combinations of kids while I'm getting to know them and their writing. (If their writing group skills are already good, I don't do this).

When I'm ready to set up permanent groups, I ask for input from the kids. We also discuss the importance of trust within a writing group. I follow their suggestions as nearly as possible in creating 3 person groups. These groups will stay together for a long time, maybe even the rest of the year. Some groups are very heterogeneous; others are very homogeneous. Groups of each type work magnificently. Mutual trust seems to be far more important than comparable writing skills. An excellent writer is not necessarily an excellent group participant.

FEEDBACK TO GROUPS.

Each writing group tapes all of its discussions via cassette recorder. At the beginning of the year I listen to the tapes after each group meeting and complete a comment sheet for each student. I am able to compliment them for the things they are doing well and offer suggestions for improving other parts of their group's procedure.

Listening to the tapes is wonderful, but very time consuming. I usually listen to about 1/3 of the tapes each week after the first few times.

I don't grade writing groups, but writing group participation is part of the English grade.

WRITING GROUPS VS. EDITING GROUPS.

Students make a clear distinction between the writing group and the editing group. When the author is still in the process of drafting and revising his piece, mechanics are not part of the discussion. When the author is ready to finalize the piece, he tells the group that he's ready for editing and they respond by focusing on mechanics.

DLB 7/14/82

STUDENTS DOCUMENT THEIR COMPOSING PROCESSES

by Diane Burkhardt
Shoreham-Wading River Middle School

My eighth grade students keep a journal in which they write about how they write. We call it the 'process journal'. I first asked students to do this several years ago because of my own experience in keeping such a journal during a New York City Writing Project summer institute. I had found it to be a real benefit. I wanted to share my enthusiasm with my students. More recently I realize that the reason I want my students to keep a process journal is because of the information it gives to them and to me about all the things that happen both within them and without them' as they compose.

1) Every writer has a composing process.
2) The writer is the best source of information about how he/she composes.
3) There is value to the individual writer in becoming aware of all aspects of his/her composing process.
4) There is value to the classroom community of writers in sharing individual composing processes.

Students write regularly in their process journals as they are rehearsing. drafting, and revising pieces of writing. I collect the journals at least once each week to read and respond to what they have written. The written dialogue that I have with each student about his/her composing is actually a form of conferencing. It's a way for me to be certain that I "speak" individually with each student about his/her writing each week.

Students use their process journals for a variety of purposes. At times they write about the conditions of their writing environment:

> *I've got my tape recorder on and I like it. I feel more relaxed with it on. I'm leaning on the wall on my bed in my room. My bed is in a corner so I can lean against the wall and hang my feet over the edge of the bed. My light is on. It is over my right shoulder. My hand is hurting so I just changed the grip. My right hand is sweating.*

Sometimes they write about the general way in which they write:

> *Whenever I write a first draft, all the points I want to make are down but just in scrambled sentences and the paragraphs are all out of order.*

They rehearse ideas for a piece:

> *What do I write? Not stealing. That's my dialogue. Falling downstairs? Maybe. Hiking accident? In wilderness? YUCK! Too hard. Babysitting? Yea! Babysat all day. Pranks and kids are bad then at end get $20 or something. "I'm not sure if it was worth it," I think to myself. I can use that. Kids give dog a bath. Fire? Too tragic. Fall? No they get in fist fight with the boy next door. Avon lady comes leaves sample. Kids draw with lipstick all over the walls.*

They make specific plans for the draft they are composing:

How to do part 2
1. *grounded -- for week after school*
2. *tell where they are next wk. end. Wander off*
3. *Tony seemed conf. Jo nervous.*
4. *dialogue*
5. *Jo runs home.*
6. *When she gets in parents notice something wrong and try to talk to her. Ask what's wrong. No go with Jo. No talk.*
7. *After thinking about Tony for a while that night she thinks that he'll probably leave her alone now that he's been turned down twice.*

Often they write at natural stopping points as they are drafting a piece:

> *I've got so many questions about how I should write this, where should I start what kind of a kid is this kid? I feel like it's definitely not flowing, it's choppy city! I can't write like a 6 year old. How is anyone going to know the difference between when he's talking to the reader or a character. This doesn't feel right. I'm making it up as I go along and I never do that.*

After writing they reflect on the draft they have completed:

Argghhhh
too long? time wise
too much description
in some parts
too little in
others.
Too much cross
out
too sloppy
too much concern
about what other
people will think
too little concentration
too much thinking
about time
too much thinking
about a certain
person.
Argghhhh!

They write as they revise:

> *I'm really stuck on this piece. I tried revising but I couldn't get going. There are so many suggestions from my writing group that I want to use and I also hate the ending. If I'm gonna' have Tony kill himself I would make it Tony's story and make Jo a minor character ...*

They evaluate:

> *I'm back. I just finished the piece and towards the end it had a lot of emotional feeling to it. It's great! I love it.*

To me what's most important is that each student use his journal in a way that is most helpful to him.

ASCD PRESENTATION -- THE CONCORD - MAY 7, 1984

1. INTRODUCTION (5 min)

a. Anita - Writing in the District (Perl/Sterling, Summer Wkshps)
b. Audrey - Aspects of the Writing Program
c. Ross - Our Presentation - Three teachers of writing & students

2. SLIDE SHOW (15 min)

3. ANITA (15 min) - Sharing - an extension of writing
room atmosphere, Anita's role

4. ROSS (15 min) - 8th grade writing classroom -
process approach
Jade - piece
Rich - piece
Janine - magazine

5. AUDREY (15 min) - Implications of Writing
Outside writing
Writing Groups
Writing Center

6. CLOSURE - Ross (3 min) - We've seen fragments here today
no one way to teach writing
kids and teachers write often in
many modes; lots of class time
reasons for writing
DISTRIBUTION OF MATERIALS

7. STATEMENTS FROM KIDS (1 MIN)

8. QUESTION/ANSWER SESSION (16 MIN)

ASCD
workshop - May 7, 1984
Hand-out

ENGLISH 8
R. Burkhardt
September 29, 1983

Good afternoon. Here is a memo to help you organize your work for tomorrow, Friday, September 30. As you know, you are supposed to write a "personal essay" for tomorrow's class. A personal essay is an essay written in the first person ("I") about some event or incident in your life, or about someone you know, etc. Remember to refer to the samples we read in class if you have questions about what you are supposed to do.

In class we agreed that a personal essay has the following characteristics:

-- it is true
-- it is written in the first person
-- it is based on personal experience
-- it often contains thoughts and feelings
-- the author "learned" something from the incident, in many cases
-- it is often a "looking back" piece or a "reflection"
-- the subject is important to the author

Pay attention as you compose your personal essay to the way you make decisions and the experience you have of writing it. I would like you to use your process journal in a way that has often proved helpful to others as they began work on pieces. Here are some sample process journal entries written last September by 8th graders:

(1) "I have no idea what to write for this essay. This is really tough. I'm going to read over those examples again. I don't think I'm ever going to be able to describe anything like those people did in the samples you gave us. All of those are about realistic things that happen to kids our age, That won't be hard to do....I have this idea about practicing the piano. I've been taking lessons for years, and I still hate to practice. I don't get any better and my mother jokes that the teacher puts cotton in her ears when it's time for my lesson. There are some funny things I could write about how I go to my lesson and haven't even looked at the piano since the last lesson, and she must know it. But she never says anything mean or sarcastic -- just all these 'too nice' comments about how I'm coming along nicely. I think she's a jerk. I think I'll start and see where to go from there."

(2) "What should I write? Gosh, I can think of so many things to write about, but it's just which one? I could write something about (my friend) and I, or I could write about my Dad. There's always something to write about my family. Or I could write about how I miss ____________. I can't really think of what to write. I wish something good would pop into my head. It seems like everything I have to write about is bad or sad. I knod of want to write something funny. If I keep writing I know something will pop up, so I'll keep on babbling here."

(3) "What am I gonna write? Not shoplifting -- too real! Falling downstairs? Maybe. Hiking accident? YUCK! Too hard. Babysitting? Yea! Babysat all day. Pranks and kids are bad, then at end get $20. "I'm not sure if it was worth it," I think to myself. I can use that. Kids give dog a bath. Fist fight with boy next door. Avon lady leaves sample. Kids draw with lipstick all over the walls."

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Those are three process journal examples from three different students. In each case they are beginning their work on writing a personal essay. They haven't written any of the essay yet. They're writing in their process journals, babbling their thoughts about what to write, how to begin, etc.

WOULD YOU TRY DOING THIS AS YOU WRITE YOUR PERSONAL ESSAY, PLEASE?

SPECIFIC ASSIGNMENT IN PROCESS JOURNAL (due tomorrow with essay) — Entry #4

a) IF YOU HAVEN'T STARTED YOUR ESSAY YET, just start babling your ideas or lack of ideas in your journal until you get one that you think you want to write about. Then start writing your personal essay on a separate piece of paper. Don't come back to your process journal unless you get stuck or decide to abandon that idea and start another one.

b) IF YOU HAVE ALREADY STARTED YOUR PERSONAL ESSAY, just write in your process journal about what you've already done and babble about where you think it will go next, how it will end, etc.

c) IF YOU HAVE FINISHED YOUR ESSAY COMPLETELY, write in your process journal as much detail as you can remember about how you wrote it, where your idea came from, any changes in ideas or plans for it, etc.

Process Journal # 10 -- February 2, 1984 JADE GLASS

Before I start writing I am going to do something a little different. Do you remember how you once told us to write about whats going on around us, and just write about whatever comes to our minds, well I felt that that helped me so I'm going to do that now first so maybe I can think of who I'm going to write to. I know that I want to write to a friend, I don't know who though. The reason why I want to write to a friend is because is that I feel that they should be appreciated. I really don't know what I'm going to qwrite about yet since I don't know who to write to. I know it won't be in the form of a poem. I want it to be a letter for them but not to them. It will be about what I appreciate them for. But I don't know who yet. Maybe I won't write it to a friend. Maybe even to a teacher. As soon as I find out, I will write my process journal entry number eleven.

FAIR WEATHER FRIEND (1/20/84)

by Janine Eldridge

You ask me for help on your school & homework,
But in return you treat me like a jerk.
Can't you see the hurt look in my eyes?
Is being my friend some kind of disguise?
The secrets I tell you, you tell everyone,
You laugh, and make jokes, you think that it's fun.
You are what they call a fair weather friend.
You get my help but never talk to me again.
I will not fall for this trick anymore,
You can't use your friendship as some kind of lure.
I thought I could trust you, but now I've learned,
Friendship is something that must be earned.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN WRITING PROCESS ENTRIES

(taken from class questions - 11/15/83)

1. What made you want to use this topic?
2. Do you usually write about this type of thing?
3. If not, why did you pick this topic?
4. What other ideas did you have to write about?
5. What form/mode are you going to write in?
6. Why that form/mode?
7. How did you get your idea?
8. Why is this udea important to you?
9. What is your main idea?/main message?/main point?
10. Who are the characters in your piece?
11. How do you feel about what you have written?
12. Are you thinking of adding to your piece?
13. Is this what you really want to write about?
14. Will you be able to write a lot about this topic?
15. Did you enjoy writing this? why? why not?
16. Was this your first idea? if not, what were the others?
17. Is there anything else you want to write about?
18. Is it true? Did this really happen to you?
19. Are you in it?
20. When does it take place? Where?
21. How long dioid it take you to write it?
22. Would this idea be better in a different mode?
23. Did you ever get stuck with your topic?
24. Did you know the "ending" before you started?
25. What part of the piece do you like best? why?

PROCESS JOURNAL #11
by Rich Jones

When I sat down to write my poem about Madrid, it made me feel a little sad. It had been less than one day ago that I was on an airplane coming home from Madrid, and even though I was back home in Shoreham, my mind was in Madrid. All day long teachers had just acted like we hadn't been gone at all. At 9th period English class someone finally acknowledged the fact that we had been gone, and instead of having us do what the rest of the kids in the class were doing, he had us write a piece of writing about our trip to Spain. That was exactly what I wanted to be doing. I hadn't been able to do much all day because I was so tired, but I did enjoy writing the poem, even though it was sad to think of Madrid.

GOODBYE TO SPAIN
By
RICH JONES

It started out on a sunny day.
We walked to school, the regular way.
The only difference in the way we walked ,
was the different things of which we talked.

We spoke of friends and saying goodbye,
knowing later that we both would cry.

When we got to the school, I looked around,
seeing the solemn faces stare at the ground.

I took a walk, one last look,
thinking of Spain and the toll it took.

Weeks ago, I knew none of the faces inside,
Would I sob with them later and forget my pride?

At a farewell breakfast with eyes still dry,
We smiled meekly knowing we soon must fly.

We must fly home to the United States,
to the curious question of our schoolmates.

As I walked away out the school door,
three weeks had passed but I wanted more.

The minute had come to say goodbye,
and the bus stop was filled with eyes un-dry.

I looked out the window to my Spanish friend, and all I could think was, "This is the end."

SELECTED ENTRIES -- PJ #13 - MAGAZINE THEME - 4/24/84

1. THEME: FAVORITE THINGS "...I picked this theme because I like to write about the things I like. I want the reader to know about me by me describing the things I like. I think when the reader reads my magazine, he/she will know more about me, and I feel that it is important to really know what an author is like by reading his/her piece of writing. I want to write things about..."

2. I think I'm going to have my theme be SCHOOL. It's important because it's part of my life. I have been going to school for about 9 years. I have a lot to say -- fun times, bad times, trips, or sports...School gives you so many OPPORTUNITIES. Some places I would have never been able to go on it it wasn't for school."

3. "My theme is FRIENDS - GOOD AND BAD. I mean all the good things and bad things that happen between friends. This theme is important to me because I see a lot of things going on between friends and I thought it would be a nice thing to write about. When people finish reading this magazine I want them to see the difference between good things and bad things in friendships."

4. THEME: MUSIC -- "This theme's important to me because it's part of me; my whole life is based upon music. Without it I wouldn't know what to do. When I say, "I love music," it's more than just liking the tunes and sounds. It's the experience that goes along with it, learning how to play it and my friends that are involved with it and even more that I can only feel but can't put into words. I want the audience to be able to feel and experience just a little of what it means to me, and maybe they'll have a different outlook the next time they hear someone say "I love music." They might think of it not only liking the sound of it but of how much music might mean to that person's experiences and life and how music fits in and surrounds that person's life, how special it is to them."

5. "Since this project is a very large part of my grade, I want to make sure that it is well done, and that is why I'm so picky about my theme. Also because I'm going to be writing about this theme for a very long time. I need something that I will not be bored with after the first week of writing, or the quality of my pieces will slowly decrease."

Growing In A Pop

By Jeremy Kropp

It was dark, as usual. Everybody was fast asleep, jampacked, and cramped. Nobody was in the mood to do anything, just sleep...

Then, all of a sudden, there was a light, a blinding light. This was no dream at all, and I was frightened. Could this have been the fabled "Twilight Zone???" Nobody was moving, we were all too scared. And then appeared a gigantic shadow, so big that it blocked out all the light. What a relief, we thought. But how wrong we were.

A thing shaped like a hand reached out and grabbed us all, ripping our glass house off of its foundation. What were we to do?

The thing shook us out of our house into a large, silver bowl. We landed in this thick oil-like goop covering the surface of this strange floor. We lay there, waiting, for what ever would come next.

A yellowish dome covered us, but we weren't planning on going anywhere. All of us were sharing this strange, foreign place with a large, metal rod. We didn't even move at all, but the rod started to.

It was like a beacon of light, hitting some of us, but just missing others. The rod pushed us around the surface, and we could feel ourselves getting hotter and hotter by the minute. We were too scared to even move, but the rod pushed us onwards.

After a couple of minutes of this "pushing," I decided to fight this feeling, because I didn't like being pushed around. Then I had a feeling my skin began to rip apart. I tried to scream, but couldn't. The pain was excruciating, and it was now or never that I put up a fight!

Before I had gotten the chance to do anything about what was happening, the feeling had stopped. Thank God! But I had changed, "matured" is a better word. I felt different, more important. Before everybody looked basically the same, but now I (like everybody else) look and feel different, I HAVE INDIVIDUALITY!!!

Everything about me has changed: my apperance, and most of all the way I look at myself. It's a new road for me, and for everybody else, and I'm going to make the most of it.

You'd never imagine all this could happen in the life of an ordinary, mild-mannered piece of popcorn!!!

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ASCD CONFERENCE – 3/6/84

①

I LIKE TO WRITE-I DON'T LIKE TO WRITE

①

JADE- I LIKE TO WRITE BECAUSE IT GIVES ME A TIME TO THINK AND IMAGINE ABOUT THINGS. WRITING HELPS ME TO GET BETTER AT IT. ALSO WHEN I WRITE THINGS DOWN. IT'S ALWAYS THERE FOR ME. LIKE A MEMORY. I DON'T LIKE TO WRITE WHEN I HAVE OTHER THINGS ON MY MIND, OR IF I JUST DON'T HAAVE SOMETHING TO WRITE ABOUT. IT'S HARDER FOR ME TO WRITE THEN.

②

JANINE-I LIKE TO WRITE IN SILENCE WITHOUT INTERUPTIONS, IN WARM SURROUNDINGS. I WRITE WHEN I HAVE AN IDEA, ON ANY KIND OF PAPER I CAN FIND, SO THAT I DON'T LOOSE MY THOUGHT. I DON'T LIKE TO WRITE WHEN MUSIC IS BLASTING OR WHEN SOMEONE IS TRYING TO TALK TO ME. IT'S ALSO VERY DISTRACTING WHEN THE LIGHTS AROUND ME AREN'T BRIGHT ENOUGH, OR MY PENCIL BREAKS, OR MY PEN RUNS OUT OF INK.

③

CINDY - I LIKE TO WRITE FREELY ON A TOPIC - OR SOMETIMES JUST IN SEARCH OF A TOPIC. I NEED TIME TO FLUSH OUT ALL OF MY IDEAS ONTO PAPER. THEN I CAN TAKE IT HOME AND ADD ALL OF THE IDEAS THAT HAVE COME UP OVER THE DAY. I DON'T LIKE TO WRITE WHEN I HAVE TO BE PERFECT AS THE WORDS HIT THE PAGE. WHEN I HAVE TIME FOR ONLY ONE COPY, I LOSE MY CREATIVTY. IT JUST DOESN'T WORK.

WRITING AND LEARNING

①

JANINE- LAST FALL OUR CLASS STUDIED ABOUT THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR. EACH PERSON TOOK THE ROLE OF EITHER A RADICAL OR A TORY, AND WE EACH KEPT A COLONIAL DIARY OF THE EVENTS THAT HAPPENED TO CAUSE THIS WAR. OUR TEACHER GAVE US FACT SHEETS, AND WE USED OUR SKILLS TO WORK THEM INTO OUR DIARIES. I WAS A TORY, MEANING THAT I WROTE FROM A BRITISH POINT OF VIEW. THE WRITING OF THE DIARY NOT ONLY TAUGHT ME TO CREATE A FICTIONAL CHARACTER, BUT BY DOING THIS WE LEARNED ABOUT THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR IN A FUN WAY.

②

CINDY - WHEN I WRITE, IT COMES FROM MY EXPERIENCE. YOU CAN'T WRITE WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW. BUT WHAT COMES OUT HELPS ME TO UNDERSTAND WHATEVER I AM WRITING ABOUT. WRITING HELPS ME TO UNDERSTAND WHO I AM AND HOW I THINK BY ORGANIZING MY THOUGHTS INTO WORDS ON PAPER. OFTEN I DISCOVER THAT I REMEMBER SOMETHING THAT I THOUGHT I HAD FORGOTTEN, AND THERE IT IS OUT ON THE PAPER. FOR ME WRITING IS LEARNING MOST OF ALL ABOUT MYSELF.

③

ELISA - WHEN I HAVE A QUESTION, I WRITE ABOUT MY CONFUSION. DOING THIS ENABLES ME TO ORGANIZE MY THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, AND IDEAS. AT TIMES WRITING HELPS ME TO SEE AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT ASPECT OF MY PROBLEM, AND BEFORE I KNOW IT, AN ANSWER MATERIALIZES. WRITING ALLOWS ME TO DISCOVER MORE ABOUT MYSELF ....THERAPY!

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DRAFTING AND REVISING

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JADE- WHEN MY TEACHER TOLD ME I HAD TO DRAFT SOMETHING THAT I ALREADY WRITTEN, I THOUGHT THAT THAT WAS A WASTE BECAUSE I ALREADY DID MY PIECE AND I THOUGHT THAT THAT WAS ALL I HAD TO DO. BUT WHEN I REVISED MY DRAFT, I HAD A LOT OF CHANGES TO MAKE AND IT WAS GOOD THAT I REVISED BECAUSE I LIKED MY PIECE MUCH BETTER. DRAFTING IS GOOD FOR ME TO DO, BECAUSE WHEN I DO MY FIRST, SECOND, AND THIRD DRAFTS, I FEEL LIKE I HAVE ENOUGH TIME TO WORK ON MY WRITING PIECES.

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RICH - FOR ME IN PAST YEARS, DRAFTING AND REVISION HAS BEEN WRITING'S BIGGEST HASSLE. TO BE HONEST, I HATED IT. DRAFTING AND REVISING A PIECE OF WRITING USUALLY INVOLVES TASKS SUCH AS SPELLING CORRECTIONS, SENTENCE AND PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE AND MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL, CONSTANTLY ASKING MYSELF, "IS MY IDEA GETTING ACROSS TO THEM?". I HAVE SINCE CHANGED MY MIND. I FIND THAT WRITING GROUPS MAKE THE TASK EASIER, AND NOW I CAN SEE THAT ALL THE WORK DOES PAY OFF WHEN I READ OVER A WELL REVISED FINAL DRAFT.

③

ELISA - WRITING IS LIKE A PIECE OF CLAY THAT IS MOLDED INTO A BEAUTIFUL PIECE OF ART. I AM CONSTANTLY SHAPING THE WORDS TO FORM A BETTER PIECE OF WRITING. I WORK ON A PIECE UNTIL I HAVE RELAYED MY IDEA AS CLEARLY AND STRAIGHT FORWARD AS POSSIBLE. THIS MAY REQUIRE NUMEROUS DRAFTS AND MUCH FRUSTRATION, BUT IN THE END, IT IS WORTH IT.

4-115

WRITING GROUPS

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JADE- I FEEL THAT A WRITING GROUP IS GREAT TO HAVE BECAUSE WHEN I READ MY WRITING OUT LOUD, I READ IT SO THAT MY WRITING GROUP CAN TRY AND HELP ME WITH IT, AND WHEN THEY GIVE ME SUGGESTIONS, IT HELPS MY PIECE, AND IT ALSO HELPS ME SEE THINGS THAT I MIGHT WANT TO IMPROVE AND EXPAND.

②

RICH - IN 8TH GRADE OUR WRITING GROUPS ARE MADE UP OF ABOUT 3 OR 4 AUTHORS AND THE PURPOSE OF OUR WRITING GROUPS IS TO REVISE OUR WRITING IN A "GROUP EFFORT" WAY. AFTER AN AUTHOR HAS READ HIS OR HER PIECE THE OTHER GROUP MEMBERS COMMENT AND MAKE SUGGESTIONS ABOUT THE PIECE SO THAT THE AUTHOR MIGHT CONSIDER THEM AND MAYBE MAKE SOME CHANGES. I, MYSELF WROTE A PIECE ABOUT MY TRIP TO SPAIN. AFTER THE FIRST DRAFT, IT WENT THROUGH 2 OR 3 MORE DRAFTS AND THEN FINALLY TO THE FINAL DRAFT WHICH I WAS VERY PROUD OF BECAUSE BECAUSE I FELT THAT THE PIECE WAS AS GOOD AS I COULD MAKE IT. (CROSS TO OTHER SIDE AFTER SPEAKING)

③

ALISON - SHAARIING WRITING CAN BE A FRIGHTFUL EXCPERIENCE, BUT ONLY WHEN READING TO AN UNRESPONSIVE GROUP. WHEN I'M READING MY PIECE TO A GROUP I KNOW WILL LISTEN, I CAN READ ANYTHING. THEIR INTEREST GIVES ME CONFIDENCE, EAARSING THE FEAR THAT MY WRITING WON'T BE ACCEPTED OR WILL SOUND AWKWARD. THIS KIND OF SHARING GIVES ME THE EXCITEMENT NEEDED TO WANT A PERFECT PIECE.

⑤

OWNERSHIP

③

RICH - TO MOST PEOPLE OWNING A PIECE OF PAPER WITH INK ON IT ISN'T ANY BIG DEAL; BUT AFTER PUTTING 4 OR 5 HOURS INTO THAT PIECE OF WRITING AND FINALLY HAVING A FINAL DRAFT MAKES ME FEEL A SPECIAL SORT OF OWNERSHIP TOWARDS IT. I FEEL LIKE WHAT EVER CREDIT IT GETS SHOULD BE MINE BECAUSE I CREATED IT. I FEEL GOOD WHEN I READ A GOOD PIECE OF WRITING, BUT WHEN I ALSO WROTE IT, I FEEL GREAT.

②

ELISA - WHEN I FINISH A PIECE OF WRITING IT IS SOMETHING OF MINE, SOMETHING THAT I FEEL PROUD OF, THAT I HAVE CREATED. IT IS TOTALLY MINE. I AM THE ONE AT THE CONTROLS, MOLDING THE WORDS TO PRODUCE MY VERY BEST PIECE. MANY TIMES THE WORDS WILL NOT FLOW; THEN I JUST CONCENTRATE ON PUTTING WORDS DOWN ON PAPER WITH CONFIDENCE THAT SOMETHING WILL COME. WHEN I HAVE FINISHED A PIECE AND FEEL I HAVE DONE MY BEST , I AM SATISFIED...AT LEAST FOR THE MOMENT. BUT I AM ALWAYS LOOKING FOR WAYS TO IMPROVE..TO SATISFY MYSELF BETTER. I LIKE THAT SATISFIED FEELING.

①

ALISON- WRITING IS A SIEVE FOR MY THOUGHTS AND HELPS ME TO SORT OUT THE THINGS SWIRLING IN MY HEAD. SINCE MY WRITING REFLECTS MY THOUGHTS, IT IS VERY PERSONAL, It IS MINE, SOMETHING I CAN SHARE OR KEEP HIDDEN AWAY, BE PROUD OF OR EMBARRASSED ABOUT, BE SATISFIED WITH AND EVEN AFRAID OF.

[redacted]

(5)

WHY I WRITE

②

JANINE- WHEN I WRITE, I ALWAYS HAVE A MOTIVE. IT MAY BE TO LET MY FEELINGS OUT, TO GIVE AS A GIFT TO SOMEONE, OR BECAUSE MY TEACHER WANTS ME TOO. I ALWAYS TRY TO PUT MY BEST INTO WHAT I WRITE, THAT WAY THE AUDIENCE APPRECIATES IT MORE, AND WHEN THEY APPRECIATE IT, IT MOTIVATES ME TO WRITE MORE.

①

ALISON -- WRITING IS AN OUTLET FOR EMOTION, LIKE LAUGHING OR CRYING. IT IS A MEDICATION, LIFTING MY SPIRITS AND MAKING ME FEEL CLEAR AND FREE. WRITING IS A FRIEND. WHEN I'M EXCITED, FULL OF ENERGY AT 2 IN THE MORNING, AND THERE IS NO ONE ELSE AROUND, MY JOURNAL LISTENS TO ME.

③

CINDY - MY BEST WRITING COMES OUT WHEN I FEEL VERY EMOTIONAL, ESPECIALLY WHEN I AM UPSET. I WRITE TO UNDERSDSTAND WHY. IF I CAN'T COMMUNICATE TO SOMEONE, I WRITE. IF I WANT TO REMEMBER SOMETHING, I WRITE. WHEN I LIKE TO RECREATE A VACATION OR AN EXPERIENCE, I DO IT NOT ONLY WITH PICTURES BUT WITH WORDS. I WRITE. WRITING MAKES ME FEEL A SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT. THAT'S WHY I WRITE.

4-118

NASSAU READING COUNCIL PRESENTATION

MAY 15, 1984

8 P.M.

SHELTER ROCK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
MANHASSET, NY

. . . .

ASPECTS OF THE WRITING PROCESS

TOPIC SELECTION - TRICIA COSTELLO
DRAFTING - MIKE FORSTER
PROCESS WRITING - JOHN HEATHER
WRITING GROUPS - JADE GLASS
MAGAZINE - JANINE ELDRIDGE
BEST PIECE - JEREMY KROPP
THE TEACHER AS WRITER - ROSS BURKHARDT

4-119 869

THE PROCESS MODEL AT WORK - Aspects of a Writing Classroom

Ross Burkhardt, 8th Grade English Teacher
Shoreham-Wading River Middle School, Shoreham, NY 11786

THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

In my English class students write regularly on topics of their own choosing. Twenty-seven students in one class, twenty one in another, began writing on the first day of school and have written on countless occasions in many modes since then. Students have written essays, poems, stories, newspaper articles, business letters, interior monologues, dialogues, journal entries, free writing, and more. Often we use a REHEARSAL - DRAFT -REVISE - EDIT - PUBLISH approach. On most occasions I write the same assignments that my students do and share my writing with them, just as they share it with each other.

REHEARSAL

Before assigning a piece of writing, I present examples of that mode to my students. Sometimes these are pieces written by students in previous years; sometimes they are examples culled from magazines, newspapers, or anthologies. A class discussion about a particular mode, say an interior monologue, helps students understand the possibilities and the limitations of that mode as they rehearse their pieces. My students keep process journals in which they document their composing processes, and I encourage them to "rehearse" their pieces by writing about what they want to write about before they begin composing. These prewriting activities have been of considerable help to the students in enabling them to write in different and unfamiliar modes.

DRAFTING

Students produce drafts of work. They know that they do not have to have the piece perfect, completed, and polished in a rough draft. This enables them to experiment, to venture where they might otherwise not go. A draft is a work in progress and is not considered "finished" until the author so decides.

WRITING GROUPS

Students share drafts in small writing groups composed of three or four students. These writing group discussions are taped (they occur all over the building) so that I can be a presence in the group and give the students constructive feedback on their discussion skills. Students follow a procedure in which the author distributes xerox copies of his piece, reads the piece twice while listeners make notations on their copies, and then pauses for thirty seconds. In turn, each listener "says back" the sense of the piece to the author, focussing on a central image or theme. Next, listeners "praise the positive," giving the author a sense of how his audience appreciates the piece. Listeners then ask "questions which extend," questions which, if responded to by the author in a later draft, might improve the clarity and quality of the piece. Finally, "author's time" allows the writer to raise questions he might have about the piece. By following these steps for each piece of writing, the students discuss their pieces, receive constructive criticism, work collaboratively, and get a sense of how to revise.

REVISION

Following a writing group discussion, a student will revise a piece of writing based on the feedback he received from his writing group. Often, just reading the piece aloud to others is powerful enough to provide the writer with a sense of

the strengths and weaknesses of the piece. Students also detail revisions in their process journals, engaging in writing about writing as they pay attention to their composing processes. Revisions are taken back to writing group for future discussion until the author determines that the piece says what he wants it to say. Once a piece is "done," the author then goes through an editing process with his group, dealing with issues of grammar and mechanics.

PUBLICATION

Students "publish" their pieces for real audiences. A "Letter to the Principal," an article for the school newspaper, or a "Letter of Appreciation" all have specific audiences. In my class we create class booklets, anthologies of student writing in which each student contributes a piece of his own choosing. Later this year we will create a class poetry anthology, and in the spring each student will create his own "magazine." This booklet has a theme, at least six original pieces in at least four different modes, a foreward, an "About the Author" piece, and a cover. Students receive fifteen copies of their booklets for family and friends. The pieces in this booklet all go through the drafting, revision, writing group, editing process. When a student knows his piece of writing will be read by a larger audience than the teacher, he invests more of himself in that piece.

OBSERVATIONS

Students in my classes enjoy writing. They feel good about what they produce, and they have a sense of "ownership." I am clear that I am working towards the following goals:

- -- that students learn a process approach to writing
- -- that students learn to draft and revise their pieces
- -- that students learn to discuss writing in writing groups
- -- that students publish their writing

My students have taught me many things about writing during the past three years that I have used a process model approach. Among the more significant things they have taught me are the following:

- -- that when allowed to choose their own topics, students write with more interest, creativity, and enthusiasm
- -- that eighth grade students can have meaningful discussions about their writing
- -- that process journals, pre-writing activities, and writing groups are techniques that enable students to write
- -- that paying attention to the content of the piece - the ideas being communicated - is crucial when first responding to a piece of writing
- -- that given a comfortable enviroment in which writing is taken seriously, students gain "ownership" of their writing and come to understand their composing processes

What I am also aware of is that when my students write in the context described above, they are engaged in thinking about writing in powerful ways.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN WRITING PROCESS ENTRIES

(taken from class questions - 11/15/83)

1. What made you want to use this topic?
2. Do you usually write about this type of thing?
3. If not, why did you pick this topic?
4. What other ideas did you have to write about?
5. What form/mode are you going to write in?
6. Why that form/mode?
7. How did you get your idea?
8. Why is this udea important to you?
9. What is your main idea?/main message?/main point?
10. Who are the characters in your piece?
11. How do you feel about what you have written?
12. Are you thinking of adding to your piece?
13. Is this what you really want to write about?
14. Will you be able to write a lot about this topic?
15. Did you enjoy writing this? why? why not?
16. Was this your first idea? if not, what were the others?
17. Is there anything else you want to write about?
18. Is it true? Did this really happen to you?
19. Are you in it?
20. When does it take place? Where?
21. How long didid it take you to write it?
22. Would this idea be better in a different mode?
23. Did you ever get stuck with your topic?
24. Did you know the "ending" before you started?
25. What part of the piece do you like best? why?

ENGLISH 8
R. Burkhardt
September 29, 1983

Good afternoon. Here is a memo to help you organize your work for tomorrow, Friday, September 30. As you know, you are supposed to write a "personal essay" for tomorrow's class. A personal essay is an essay written in the first person ("I") about some event or incident in your life, or about someone you know, etc. Remember to refer to the samples we read in class if you have questions about what you are supposed to do.

In class we agreed that a personal essay has the following characteristics:

-- it is true
-- it is written in the first person
-- it is based on personal experience
-- it often contains thoughts and feelings
-- the author "learned" something from the incident, in many cases
-- it is often a "looking back" piece or a "reflection"
-- the subject is important to the author

Pay attention as you compose your personal essay to the way you make decisions and the experience you have of writing it. I would like you to use your process journal in a way that has often proved helpful to others as they began work on pieces. Here are some sample process journal entries written last September by 8th graders:

(1) "I have no idea what to write for this essay. This is really tough. I'm going to read over those examples again. I don't think I'm ever going to be able to describe anything like those people did in the samples you gave us. All of those are about realistic things that happen to kids our age. That won't be hard to do....I have this idea about practicing the piano. I've been taking lessons for years, and I still hate to practice. I don't get any better and my mother jokes that the teacher puts cotton in her ears when it's time for my lesson. There are some funny things I could write about how I go to my lesson and haven't even looked at the piano since the last lesson, and she must know it. But she never says anything mean or sarcastic -- just all these 'too nice' comments about how I'm coming along nicely. I think she's a jerk. I think I'll start and see where to go from there."

(2) "What should I write? Gosh, I can think of so many things to write about, but it's just which one? I could write something about (my friend) and I, or I could write about my Dad. There's always something to write about my family. Or I could write about how I miss __________. I can't really think of what to write. I wish something good would pop into my head. It seems like everything I have to write about is bad or sad. I knod of want to write something funny. If I keep writing I know something will pop up, so I'll keep on babbling here."

(3) "What am I gonna write? Not shoplifting -- too real! Falling downstairs? Maybe. Hiking accident? YUCK! Too hard. Babysitting? Yea! Babysat all day. Pranks and kids are bad, then at end get $20. "I'm not sure if it was worth it," I think to myself. I can use that. Kids give dog a bath. Fist fight with boy next door. Avon lady leaves sample. Kids draw with lipstick all over the walls."

Those are three process journal examples from three different students. In each case they are beginning their work on writing a personal essay. They haven't written any of the essay yet. They're writing in their process journals, babbling their thoughts about what to write, how to begin, etc.

WOULD YOU TRY DOING THIS AS YOU WRITE YOUR PERSONAL ESSAY, PLEASE?

SPECIFIC ASSIGNMENT IN PROCESS JOURNAL (due tomorrow with essay) — Entry #4

a) IF YOU HAVEN'T STARTED YOUR ESSAY YET, just start babling your ideas or lack of ideas in your journal until you get one that you think you want to write about. Then start writing your personal essay on a separate piece of paper. Don't come back to your process journal unless you get stuck or decide to abandon that idea and start another one.

b) IF YOU HAVE ALREADY STARTED YOUR PERSONAL ESSAY, just write in your process journal about what you've already done and babble about where you think it will go next, how it will end, etc.

c) IF YOU HAVE FINISHED YOUR ESSAY COMPLETELY, write in your process journal as much detail as you can remember about how you wrote it, where your idea came from, any changes in ideas or plans for it, etc.

Process Journal # 10 -- February 2, 1984 JADE GLASS

Before I start writing I am going to do something a little different. Do you remember how you once told us to write about whats going on around us, and just write about whatever comes to our minds, well I felt that that helped me so I'm going to do that now first so maybe I can think of who I'm going to write to. I know that I want to write to a friend, I don't know who though. The reason why I want to write to a friend is because is that I feel that they should be appreciated. I really don't know what I'm going to owrite about yet since I don't know who to write to. I know it won't be in the form of a poem. I want it to be a letter for them but not to them. It will be about what I appreciate them for. But I don't know who yet. Maybe I won't write it to a friend. Maybe even to a teacher. As soon as I find out, I will write my process journal entry number eleven.

FAIR WEATHER FRIEND (1/20/84)

by Janine Eldridge

You ask me for help on your school & homework,
But in return you treat me like a jerk.
Can't you see the hurt look in my eyes?
Is being my friend some kind of disguise?
The secrets I tell you, you tell everyone,
You laugh, and make jokes, you think that it's fun.
You are what they call a fair weather friend.
You get my help but never talk to me again.
I will not fall for this trick anymore,
You can't use your friendship as some kind of lure.
I thought I could trust you, but now I've learned,
Friendship is something that must be earned.

4-124

Growing In A Pop

By Jeremy Kropp

It was dark, as usual. Everybody was fast asleep, jampacked, and cramped. Nobody was in the mood to do anything, just sleep...

Then, all of a sudden, there was a light, a blinding light. This was no dream at all, and I was frightened. Could this have been the fabled "Twilight Zone???" Nobody was moving, we were all too scared. And then appeared a gigantic shadow, so big that it blocked out all the light. What a relief, we thought. But how wrong we were.

A thing shaped like a hand reached out and grabbed us all, ripping our glass house off of its foundation. What were we to do?

The thing shook us out of our house into a large, silver bowl. We landed in this thick oil-like goop covering the surface of this strange floor. We lay there, waiting, for what ever would come next.

A yellowish dome covered us, but we weren't planning on going anywhere. All of us were sharing this strange, foreign place with a large, metal rod. We didn't even move at all, but the rod started to.

It was like a beacon of light, hitting some of us, but just missing others. The rod pushed us around the surface, and we could feel ourselves getting hotter and hotter by the minute. We were too scared to even move, but the rod pushed us onwards.

After a couple of minutes of this "pushing," I decided to fight this feeling, because I didn't like being pushed around. Then I had a feeling my skin began to rip apart. I tried to scream, but couldn't. The pain was excruciating, and it was now or never that I put up a fight!

Before I had gotten the chance to do anything about what was happening, the feeling had stopped. Thank God! But I had changed, "matured" is a better word. I felt different, more important. Before everybody looked basically the same, but now I (like everybody else) look and feel different, I HAVE INDIVIDUALITY!!!

Everything about me has changed: my apperance, and most of all the way I look at myself. It's a new road for me, and for everybody else, and I'm going to make the most of it.

You'd never imagine all this could happen in the life of an ordinary, mild-mannered piece of popcorn!!!

SELECTED ENTRIES -- PJ #13 - MAGAZINE THEME - 4/24/84

1. THEME: FAVORITE THINGS "...I picked this theme because I like to write about the things I like. I want the reader to know about me by me describing the things I like. I think when the reader reads my magazine, he/she will know more about me, and I feel that it is important to really know what an author is like by reading his/her piece of writing. I want to write things about..."

2. I think I'm going to have my theme be SCHOOL. It's important because it's part of my life. I have been going to school for about 9 years. I have a lot to say -- fun times, bad times, trips, or sports...School gives you so many OPPORTUNITIES. Some places I would have never been able to go on it it wasn't for school."

3. "My theme is FRIENDS - GOOD AND BAD. I mean all the good things and bad things that happen between friends. This theme is important to me because I see a lot of things going on between friends and I thought it would be a nice thing to write about. When people finish reading this magazine I want them to see the differance between good things and bad things in friendships."

4. THEME: MUSIC -- "This theme's important to me because it's part of me; my whole life is based upon music. Without it I wouldn't know what to do. When I say, "I love music," it's more than just liking the tunes and sounds. It's the experience that goes along with it, learning how to play it and my friends that are involved with it and even more that I can only feel but can't put into words. I want the audience to be able to feel and experience just a little of what it means to me, and maybe they'll have a different outlook the next time they hear someone say "I love music." They might think of it not only liking the sound of it but of how much music might mean to that person's experiences and life and how music fits in and surrounds that person's life, how special it is to them."

5. "Since this project is a very large part of my grade, I want to make sure that it is well done, and that is why I'm so picky about my theme. Also because I'm going to be writing about this theme for a very long time. I need something that I will not be bored with after the first week of writing, or the quality of my pieces will slowly decrease."

CONFERENCE ON COLLEGE COMPOSITION & COMMUNICATION
NEW YORK, NEW YORK
MARCH 30, 1984

THREE STUDENT WRITERS FROM HIGH SCHOOL TO COLLEGE

PRESENTED BY

NANCY WILSON, RESEARCHER
HERBERT H. LEHMAN COLLEGE, CUNY

AUDRE ALLISON, TEACHER
SHOREHAM-WADING RIVER HIGH SCHOOL

AND

ALEXANDRA KROEGER, Student at Princeton University
SUZANNE SCHELD, Student at Yale University
DAVID ECKLUND, Student at Concordia College

This work is supported by NIE contract no. 6-82-0011, "How Teachers Teach the Writing Process," Sondra Perl, principal investigator.

4-127 877

REFLECTIONS ON CREATIVE WRITING CLASS ----- ALEX

I was really fortunate to get into this class. Six of us, and a professor, everyone a writer. I felt at home and comfortable right away. What a different feeling than the Econ 101 lecture halls of 300. We met at 10 PM. Everyone read everyone elses work. Everyone was considerate, we were all open to the same vulnerability.

This afforded me with:

a) A situation where I had to write. No ands, ifs or buts, you have a short story due every two weeks. (Well maybe one or two "ifs" each semester) It could be a revision, maybe it wouldn't be great, but I had to sit down and write. To me this was great. It forced me to discipline myself in a way I hadn't been able to.

b) To continue this afforded me with a situation where I wanted to do well. Other students encouraged me, but they were also critical.

I'm learning how to rein my creativity. At the same time though I'm exploring new styles and voices. I used to aim for the short, concise, powerful, slightly dramatic sentence. Lately, I've found myself becoming an old storyteller. I want to entertain. My stories are becoming longer, exaggerated, and more detailed. For now this is what I like. Maybe I won't tomorrow. For now, I like it and I like that I'm able to explore.

EXCERPTS FROM CLASSROOM NOTES: FRESHMAN ENGLISH ------- SUE

September

End of the first full week----we've written 4 brief essays.

People are saying they don't feel the same about their papers when they come back with marks and comments all over it.

I think Professor A wants us to improve technique more than anything. That must be why we are using the Oxford Guide Text. These pieces are short, but amazingly filled with grammatical errors, and she points all of them out. The grades given are based on technical/mechanical success. Not too much back on ideas/style yet. This is expository! Actually, the interview is where we'll probably talk about style, etc.

Today I had my interview with Professor A. I was very upset afterwards...I wanted to cry. Mostly because I can't read this woman. She said the papers I was handing in were first drafts. I said we only have time for first drafts because the assignments are practically overnight.

She said I ought to have a little more respect for the reader and I should make an effort even when I write first drafts for my sentences to be coherent and correct. I told her my prime concern is not grammar after my first try at something. I don't like to get hung up on that, I make a note "come back to this" or something or I know mentally that it is wrong and it bothers me but I want to keep writing.

She also mentioned that I wasn't taking the writing assignments seriously. How seriously am I supposed to take a 1-2 page narrative or description piece?

She looked at my draft for the big 3-5 page paper and said looks like this will need a few drafts. She's kidding me, right? Of course it needs drafts.

October

Lecture on sentences and word choices. No one is paying attention. Not one person read the Oxford Guide chapters....

She lectured the entire period...nobody was listening.

I am positive that no one gets anything from these lectures.

Early November

We tried writing groups today. Prof. A pulled up a chair to my group. We were listening to Mark's piece, The Storm. I asked Mark lots of open ended questions to find out how he felt about this piece. He really liked it...At first he was shy about reading but towards the end he read with no hesitancy. Yes, even confident Yale students are sometimes shaky... let's see, Prof. A made comments like, "If it were my piece, I'd ......" which is groovy, respect for ownership and all, but of course if the teacher says "If it were me" you are going to change it her way for the grade.

November

I don't think Professor A is supportive with her criticism.

She never points out anything good about my papers, so I never know what I am supposed to be doing, only what I'm not.....

I don't like getting back papers that have comments like, "a better word is ....." suggesting that her way is better or The Way, The Word to Choose, or else it is wrong.

By now I feel like I only know how to revise two ways (1) with my crummy sentences or (2) her sentences (which will get me the better grade because it is better) but I never understand on my own why my sentences are bad, only that hers are better.

At this point, I am really sick of English. I don't know why I can't write well, I don't know why I can't see mistakes, and I've just spent three months not improving and getting more frustrated by the paper.

Jan.

Freshman English.....I hated it. It was a step backwards for me.

REFLECTIONS ON FRESHMAN ENGLISH --------DAVE

The purpose of my freshman English was to make sure that all of the students had mastered the fundamental skills of English. We began the semester with a placement test which determined which section we would take.

I really didn't learn much from the course. We were instructed on what was expected from our papers. Weeks later, when we got our graded work back, we spent ½ of that days class discussing the teacher's satisfaction or dissatisfaction on the collective effort of the class. We never were asked to revise or give any further thought to a piece after it had been graded.

I was not disappointed with the course but I did not have very high expectations of it to start with.

I wrote the stuff I cared most about for me rather than the course.

. . . . . .

The writing I did for English 101 was for the Professor and he was the intended audience. I suppose that writing for a certain target audience is an important and useful skill. Perhaps I like what I write on my own the most because I am the audience, but I really think I write better when it is something I really want to write. The ideal situation for me would be if my target audience was interested in what I wanted to write about, and gave me input on how to revise my writing to bring it closer to its potential.

RELATING READING AND WRITING IN THE COLLEGE YEARS

University of New Hampshire
Durham, New Hampshire

October 12-14, 1984

WHEN READERS WRITE: LITERATURE LOGS IN THE CLASSROOM

Presented by

Nancy Wilson
New York City Writing Project
Herbert H. Lehman College, CUNY
Bronx, New York 10468

and

Audre Allison
Shoreham-Wading River High School
Shoreham, New York 11786

This work is supported, in part, by NIE contract no. 6-82-0011, "How Teachers Teach the Writing Process," Sondra Perl, principal invesitgator.

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Audre's Invitation to Students

WONDERINGS AND WANDERINGS

As you are reading keep a daily log where you discuss your response and the ideas in your book. In this way you will begin to connect these ideas to your own experience, making the novel your own, a part of your storehouse of knowledge and experience. As you reflect, ruminate, and question, listen carefully to yourself and attempt to describe the effect the book is having on you. Let your response connect to an idea, reject an idea or create an idea. Find associations, see where they lead. To images? To fantasies? To human experience? How is the writing speaking to you? This is your reading process. Examine it and take note of what you do with the material you read. Respond deeply, write honestly, admit confusion, expand on the author's ideas, attempt to discover your own.

Try exploring with the following sentence starters:

1. I wonder...
2. I began to think of...
3. I suppose...
4. I don't see...
5. I like the idea...
6. I know the feeling...
7. I noticed...
8. I love the way...
9. I was surprised...
10. I can't really understand...
11. I thought...
12. I can't believe...
13. If I had been...
14. I was reminded of...
15. Why did...
16. Maybe...
17. I wish...

Each time you read, respond by writing in your journal. Enter the date of each response. Your journal will be invaluable to you when discussing the book or when attempting to write about the book. At the end of the year, you will have accumulated thesis statements and supporting evidence enabling you to write intelligently about what you have read. But most important, you will have created something all your own, and you will know and remember what you've read.

From Student's Reading Logs

REFLECTIONS ON CHARACTERS AND EVENTS

It upset me to know that they have the power to hurt someone like Hester and Pearl and then say that it is in the name of God. Such hypocrites! Hester's only sin is in loving someone, someone that she hadn't the right to love. Their sin is in hating someone and causing such pain in a young woman's life. Their sin is the greater. And Hester is better than the "unknown" sinners because she is paying for her sin and becoming stronger. People are embarrassed by her strength and their weakness.

The Scarlet Letter Eva

I loved Tom's ideas and inventions. I felt very sad when Tom killed himself. It is the way we are. We kill the part of us that isn't socially acceptable or that causes pain.

East of Eden Beth

Cal was probably the most human person in the novel. He didn't live in a dream world like his dad and he was very different from his brother Aron. Cal had emotions of love, anger, hatred, self pity and more. None of the others, Katie, Adam or Aron ever displayed all these emotions. When Adam died I knew that this was the chance that Cal could start his life. He didn't have to worry about trying to win his dad's approval. Cal realizes at the end probably the most important thing he'll ever learn. He is human. Not evil. Human. Not perfect.

East of Eden Katy

It's like I'm seeing through a poetic drifter's eyes. Which makes me think maybe all of the drifters aren't bums and derelicts, just poets in a lost land knowing what they like to see and feel but not knowing how to express their feelings like writers and poets.

On the Road Tony

It reminds me of a book I once read, Johnny Got His Gun. It begins with a hero type and the guy comes back a nothing at all. The punishment of war is both sickening and disgraceful. These books scare me. Maybe someday I will be in the war. I'll leave as a hero but come back a nothing and maybe not come back at all. It's frightening but that is what war has proven to be, a sickening test of pain.

Red Badge of Courage Brian

RESPONSES TO THE WAY WRITERS WRITE

"Unquiet darkness." I wonder what Fitzgerald means. Maybe the night sounds and a vague unease. It's a striking phrase.

The Great Gatsby Karen

I love some of the descriptions that Steinbeck uses in his writing. "A spear of grass," "Lee watched him waiting for the reaction the way a doctor waits for the reaction to a hypodermic." There's just something about Steinbeck's metaphors that make things mean more to me and help me more deeply understand the book. For example when Samuel Hamilton's wife Liza is making pancakes he says, "the hot cakes rose like little hassocks, and small volcanoes formed and erupted on them until they were ready to be turned." Who would think of comparing volcanoes to pancakes? Think about it. "A spear of grass" is just about my favorite. That's all I need and I think of green refreshing grass as an amazingly great thing. I don't know why but it shows me that his writing really tugs the reins in my brain and pulls out information or something. This guy is a real first class excellent writer.

East of Eden Kevin

Nick and Daisy cousins. Why did F. Scott do that? I don't think it was a good idea. I didn't like the way F. Scott delayed on the information on people and who they are, like Jordan Baker, the other lady mentioned in the beginning of the book. She has to go to some tournament, but F. Scott doesn't tell us what for. That bothers me....

The Great Gatsby Greg

I noticed that almost all of the author's books were written in California, the place where he lived and grew up and knows well. I liked this because I got very clear visions whenever he described anything. I find that it is always easier for the reader to picture something the author has written if the author wrote it with a real picture in his own mind as well. I know that is how it works for me when I write.

East of Eden Meaghan

I love this book! With each page, the plot unfolds a little bit. I get the feeling that there are an infinite amount of things that will happen. Everything seems to want to come together. Samuel Hamilton is a really good person. I like the way he is worked into the story without any jolt. This book really flows. Steinbeck is so good at setting the stage. Lives parallel and do not touch. At the same time you know sooner or later they will meet.

East of Eden Karen

This book deals with reality. Which is different from many books I've read. So many times I'll be reading a book and I'll be like, is this for real or what! Edith Wharton writes in the way that I can honestly relate to the feeling of the romance Charity is going threw, like I'm Charity. I understand the disappointment of Harney not showing up on time, not calling and I understand even more the happiness they go through when they're together. When he comes back with the brooch. Now to me that's love! That's so nice!! How does Edith Wharton make it so real even if it was like long ago. She knows how people feel and she tells a lot of little details so you know and you feel it too.

4-135 Summer Michelle

PERSONAL CONNECTIONS

Poor Charity. I felt so sorry for her...All during the book I was happy at times when Charity met with Mr. Harney, but when she became pregnant I felt sad and I wished that her and Harney would be married. He left her and that made me sad... The way Charity thought - I sometimes think that way. Like when she looked at other girls and envied certain things about them. Their richness and clothing... I loved Charity. She daydreamed, which is like me. It was Charity's first time love. She went through the happiness, the jealousy, the pain, and I went through it with her.

Summer Lynne

Why didn't I cry when Healy died? I was just sitting there reading, and I just didn't cry!! As a matter of fact, I didn't cry when anyone died! What's wrong with me??? I was so into the book and I just didn't cry! This is so annoying. I was putting myself in everyone's place, making myself be each person and I didn't even cry!! Maybe because if I was that person who died, I couldn't have cried for myself. That must be the reason. But I usually put myself in the place of every single character! At all times! This is the first I've never Cried! Am I becoming unfeeling? Maybe I was being like Joseph so much that I felt like him. But then he even cried when Mr. Healy died! UGH!!!!!

Captains and the Kings Erin

How astonished I am. Isabel, I feel like ripping her out of the page, roughing her up and saying, "I told you so." But no, she married and stayed with that idiot Osmond. Perhaps there is something here which I do not see. But I wonder why she stays with this man who robbed her of everything that made her significant.

....Quite a blow for the reader who has come to admire our heroine's independence. At the end it appears as if she has willingly given up even more of her independence rather than leaving to begin anew. She goes back with her mind not on herself but on salvaging rummage. Perhaps I misconstrue this however, and the author is showing Isabel's strength in facing a bad situation rather than running from it. Nevertheless, I have doubts.

....I wish I could say that I enjoyed the novel as much as I thought I would in the first few chapters. Yet I see now that I have lost almost my love for the heroine. Maybe the author has made a point in this.

The Portrait of a Lady Sandra

Ernest Hemingway seems to think men need sex and women to survive. I could never go to a whorehouse. It would be a total misinterpretation of love. I don't think he knows the relationship between love and sex. The whole thing in this beginning scene is disgusting and I find it depressing. It puts me in a negative mood for the upcoming events.

Tenente is falling in love. I know how he feels in the beginning when he isn't sure if he loves her. I feel that same way sometimes even though I am still quite young...I'm really interested in their love story.

He fell so much in love I don't think he would mind getting hurt and having to stay for another six months. I really like the way she devotes herself to him and is always so considerate. It seems too good to be true though. Tenente has got it made. He sleeps practically all day and then is able to see Catherine at night. I wish I had a relationship like that right now. It would make me feel so good.

I think it is terrible that she is pregnant because now Tenente will have to worry about dying constantly and will not be a good soldier. I wish the war would end so I could just read about love and never have to even imagine death. This book is making me very moody and I don't know whether that is good or bad. If a lot of death comes and depressing things, it could be very tough to read. But at the moment I'm feeling great because of the book....

Love has changed Tenente...he isn't the same scummy man he used to be....

It's great that he caught the train. I wonder if it'll take him to Catherine. I hope so. I miss her from the story. He misses her too....

I just love Catherine's kindness. It's a perfect love story! It involves adventure and they fight against the authorities to make their love work....

What a sad ending!!... It's hard to explain how I feel. I'm shocked. I just can't believe that everything they had is gone. She was so brave and caring throughout the ordeal. How sad! I feel as if I would not like to grow up and have children if this sort of thing can happen. How terrifying! I wanted a happy ending, not something like this. Hemingway should have continued...at least what is Mr. Henry's reaction??? Something like suicide I suppose. I'm really disappointed. I feel awful.

A Farewell to Arms   Dave

4-137

ON KEEPING READING LOGS

In writing about reading I find that there are thoughts in me that don't come out unless I write. These are feelings I have about the book that were invisible to me. Once they come out and I look at them I realize a few more things about my reading and about my own writing. Only after I have written them are they clearly visible. This helps me to get closer in touch with my own writing and helps me know how I want to shape it, and new thoughts and feelings are created in the act of writing. The more writing about reading the more thoughts, the more thoughts the more knowledge, the more knowledge the better the writing and the understanding of it.

* * * *

Elisa

I think that writing in my R.J. helps me. It allows me to sort out the story and my reactions to it. Often I find that my initial feelings are not my only feelings nor my strongest feelings. I find that by searching with my writing, I locate a great deal of hidden emotions and ideas about what I read from deep inside. I usually don't feel satisfied until I locate these other feelings. I know that they are there and I feel them but until I write them they don't find words and I'm not sure what I feel. It's kind of like when you hear a voice at the end of a tunnel; you know someone's there but you don't know who until you get to the end. I also like to share what I write with friends who do the same thing. This gives me a chance to see the same situation in many different lights and perhaps re-evaluate what I have written. I might possibly correct a misconception.

* * * *

Eva

I don't like to read just to answer the teacher's questions because then I'm always nervous about what I should pay attention to and I never know the right thing to look for. Writing in my reading journal helps me pay attention to what I like or don't like, not what someone else likes or doesn't.

* * * *

Kevin

I connect when characters are like me and I love that.

* * * *

Erin

I react when a character does something that I would never have done, and then I keep trying to figure out why the character acted that way or why the writer wanted the character to act that way or why the writer wanted the reader to think. I try to answer those questions myself or ask someone else's opinion. If I can't figure out an answer that satisfies me I guess I just figure that the writing isn't very good because it didn't work for me or else I'm too young to appreciate it...or I just keep wondering.

* * * *

Katy

I like to learn something new from what I read and then write about it and what it makes me think about, so I don't forget it. Sometimes I like to just go off and write about what the story reminds me of. I think most good stories start me thinking and I like to write what they make me think about.

* * * *

Scot

Sometimes when I read I just know something feels right or it sounds just right and I agree even though I never ever thought of it. It seems like lighting a candle to see what I only felt before.

* * * *

Cheryl

I used to find reading boring...Most of the time after I'd read a novel I'd forget what it was about. But when I started to keep a log I began to ask myself questions about what I was reading...I began to understand what I read. Now I write about everything I read... Writing about reading has opened a whole new world for me.

* * * *

Lynne

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